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ISSUE 129 JUNE 2003

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**TINY COMPO:** When was the original Half-Life unleashed on the world?



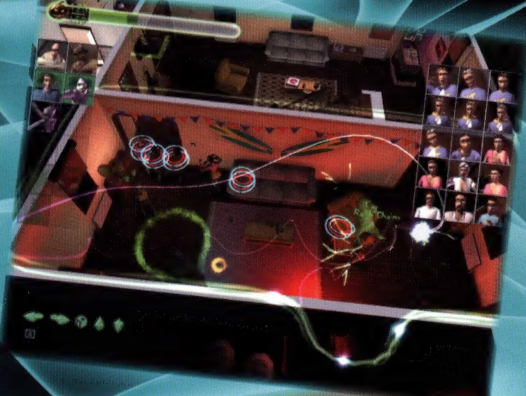
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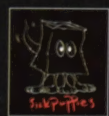
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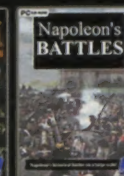
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Napoleon's Battles



Northland



Moon Tycoon



Prince of Qin Gold



Runaway



Vietnam



The Watchmaker



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## contents →



## Half-Truths

The Internet has made a lot of things easier: keeping track of your finances 24 hours a day, buying CDs, getting your hands on the filthiest porn even if you're not old enough to grow anything resembling a moustache.

On the flipside it has made it a lot harder to keep secrets. One sniff of anything is all it takes, and once it's out there, be it information or an image, it spreads faster than the deadliest virus until it's plastered across every gaming site the world over.

That's why we were in turns thrilled/honoured and, to be honest, a tad shit-scared about being entrusted by Valve Software to be the only UK gaming mag to be allowed into its headquarters to see *Half-Life 2*. How could we keep something this big quiet? But we have, and (at the time of going to press) everyone else involved has managed to keep the game under wraps as well. If all goes according to plan, Valve is going to make an announcement that the game exists just before we go on sale, but no screenshots are being released until April 28, the day this issue lands on shelves across the country. It's exciting stuff, and to celebrate we got Valve to give us the official *Half-Life* orange (Pantone 021, if you're interested) to coat our snazzy wallet, making it a real collector's item.

Back on the Internet though, the lack of hard info about *Half-Life 2* has only encouraged speculation. And, as is the case in 99.87 per cent of Internet gossip, it's all been wildly off the mark.

"*Half-Life 2* is going to be a console exclusive." Nope. It's leading on the PC, and what's more it's going to be ready before the end of the year – September is the date that's being bandied about, and from what we've seen of the game we can confirm that it's really not very far from completion.

"The original was a one-off, there's no way that Valve can follow it and that's why it's been so quiet." Nope. "Valve has been too busy surfing to worry about coding a game." Erm, double nope. Martin's seen the game running and he came back foaming at the mouth. Check the mammoth 12-page preview we've put together and you'll see why.

"*Half-Life 2* is a hex-based strategy game." Actually, I made that one up, but I'm thinking of posting it up on the Internet to see what happens.

Dave Woods  
Editor



## HALF-LIFE 2 P38

After a five-year wait, the mother of all sequels is revealed – and we've played it! PCZ pushes the boat out with a huge 12-page preview

COVER  
DISKS P126 →

## ■ 2 HUGE EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

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## FIRST LOOK

### 10 JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

YOUR FAVOURITE JEDI 'EM UP RETURNS - LATEST SCREENS AND INFO HERE

### 12 DAY OF DEFEAT

COUNTER-STRIKE'S WWII COUSIN GETS A FULL RETAIL MAKEOVER

## BULLETIN

### 14 CALL OF DUTY

THE SECRET NEW PROJECT FROM THE TRUE TALENTS BEHIND MEDAL OF HONOR - EXCLUSIVE FIRST SHOTS!

### 18 SPECIAL REPORT

HOW GAMES ARE GETTING THEIR FACTS STRAIGHT WITH A NEW BREED OF GAME ADVISORS

### 21 EMU ZONE

WHAT'S NEW IN THE WORLD OF PC EMULATION?

### 26 HOTSHOTS

STAR TREKKIN' NEW SHOTS OF ELITE FORCE 2

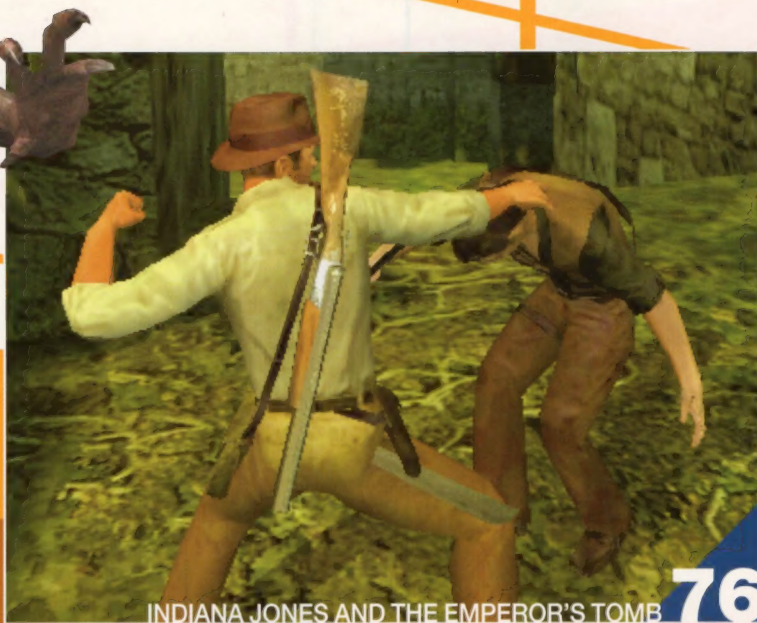
## FEATURES

### 30 JUST ONE MORE GO

WE ALL KNOW THAT SOMETIMES GAMERS GO TOO FAR. BUT IF YOU THINK YOU'RE BAD, JUST WAIT TILL YOU READ THESE HARROWING TALES OF TRUE-LIFE GAMES ADDICTION

### 140 GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

UNCOVERING THE STORY BEHIND RPG CLASSIC BALDUR'S GATE



INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB 76



EVE ONLINE: THE SECOND GENESIS 58



RISE OF NATIONS 70

## HARDWARE

### 100 NEWS

### 102 GRAPHICS BENCHMARKS

OUR REGULAR LOOK AT THE FASTEST CARDS MONEY CAN BUY

### 104 GADGETS

THE HOTTEST NEW KIT PUT THROUGH ITS PACES

### 106 REVIEWS

KISS DP-450 DVD/MEDIA PLAYER, AND PALMBUTLER GO UNDER THE SCOPE

### 108 DEAR WANDY

OUR RESIDENT MR FIX-IT

### 110 WATCHDOG

KEEPING THE BASTARDS HONEST

## EXTENDED PLAY

### 120 THE GUIDE

ABUSED IN ONLINE GAMES? WANDY'S GOT THE KEY TO UNLOCKING YOUR GAMING CRED

### 124 MODSQUAD

THE BEST NEW MODS REVIEWED

### 126 DISC PAGES

### 130 FIGHT CLUB

PLAY ONLINE WITH OR AGAINST THE PC ZONE TEAM

### 134 MAILBOX

YOUR LETTERS SHOT DOWN IN FLAMES

## REAR VIEW

### 136 THE A-LIST

YOUR ONE-STOP GAME BUYER'S GUIDE

### 145 RETRO ZONE

GET ALL TEARY OVER DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

### 146 MR CURSOR

HE'S AFRAID OF OVERCLOCKING

# PCZONE

DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD  
30 CLEVELAND STREET  
LONDON W1T 4JD

### DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH

Editor Dave Woods 020 7907 6375  
Associate Editors Anthony Holden 020 7907 6377  
Jamie Sefton 020 7907 6378  
Group Production Editor Ruth Lindsay 020 7907 6371  
Senior Art Editor Phil Clark 020 7907 6390  
Reviews Editor Martin Korda 020 7907 6379  
Section Editor Rhianna Pratchett 020 7907 6376  
Junior Designer Jamie Malcolm 020 7907 6374  
Designers Tim MacDonald, John Woodford  
Sub Editors Steve O'Hagan, Michael Barrett, Brian Reid  
Contributors Chris Anderson, Stuart Campbell, Mark Eveleigh, Jon Jordan, Steve Hill, Mark Hill, Tony Lamb, Steve O'Hagan, Adam Phillips, Paul Presley, Keith Pullin, Richie

TEL: 020 7907 6000 EMAIL: [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk)  
FAX: 020 7907 6020 WEBSITE: [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)

Shoemaker: Steve Spence, Scott Steinberg and Phil Ward  
Photography Simon Clay  
Publisher EPU Sarah Givver 020 7907 6332  
Disc Producers Alan Stonebridge 020 7907 6336  
Cecil Ashley 020 7907 6333 Lee Cooker 020 7907 6334  
CD Editor Mark Eveleigh 020 7907 6335  
Senior Online Editor Gareth Ramsey 020 7907 6815  
Online Editor Stuart Bishop 020 7907 6817  
Hardware Photography Simon Clay  
Origination ColourFlow 020 7907 6022  
Printed in England by ET Heron  
Distribution Seymour Distribution

### ALIEN INVADERS

Group Publisher Duncan Tickell 020 7907 6352  
Publisher Tara Leathers 020 7907 6508  
Group Sales Director Ian Westwood  
Games Group Ad Manager Mandy Hewitt 020 7907 6670  
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# contents

## REVIEWS

- 70 **RISE OF NATIONS**  
A LOT MORE THAN JUST CIV  
IN REAL-TIME
- 76 **INDIANA JONES AND  
THE EMPEROR'S TOMB**  
WHIP IT GOOD
- 78 **BLITZKRIEG**  
A BUNCH OF PANZERS
- 82 **ULTIMA ONLINE:  
AGE OF SHADOWS**  
THE BRAND NEW EXPANSION PACK
- 83 **TROPICO 2:  
PIRATE COVE**  
A TRULY CUT-THROAT  
STRATEGY GAME
- 84 **DEVASTATION**  
GRITTY URBAN GUNPLAY
- 88 **STRIKE FIGHTERS:  
PROJECT 1**  
SWINGING SIXTIES FLIGHT SIM
- 89 **GLOBAL POWER**
- 89 **RAYMAN 3:  
HOODLUM HAVOC**

- 90 **RE-RELEASES**  
ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2: GOLD,  
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: GOLD,  
SERIOUS SAM GOLD, EMPIRE  
EARTH GOLD AND MANY MORE
- 92 **UPDATES**  
MULTIPLAYER REVIEW OF NO ONE  
LIVES FOREVER 2 DEATHMATCH
- 93 **FEEDBACK**  
IT'S BACK! HAVE YOUR SAY HERE.
- 94 **SUPERTEST**  
BATTLE OF THE STEALTH GAMES.  
SPLINTER CELL VS METAL GEAR  
SOLID 2 VS NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2  
VS HITMAN 2 VS IGI 2: COVERT STRIKE



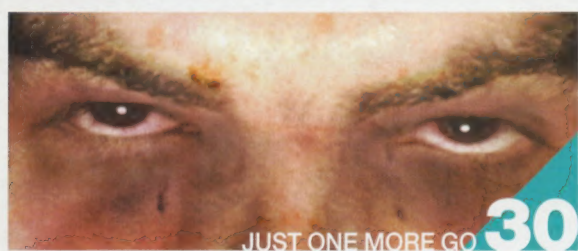
BATTLEFIELD COMMAND **52**



SUPERTEST **94**



HALF-LIFE 2 **38**



JUST ONE MORE GO **30**

## PREVIEWS

- 38 **HALF-LIFE 2**
- 52 **BATTLEFIELD  
COMMAND:  
EUROPE AT WAR**
- 56 **BLOODRAYNE**
- 58 **EVE ONLINE: THE  
SECOND GENESIS**
- 60 **CHASER**
- 62 **WARHAMMER ONLINE**
- 64 **REPUBLIC: THE  
REVOLUTION**

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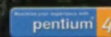
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**FIRST  
Look!**

**Back To School...**

# STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

Once, twice, three times a Jedi...

■ **JEDI MASTER** Dave Woods

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

**DEVELOPER** Raven Software  
**PUBLISHER** Activision  
**EXPECTED RELEASE DATE** Q4 2003  
**WEBSITE** www.ravensoft.com

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- The third in a series that has been consistently excellent
- Create your own character
- Customise your own lightsabers
- Open-ended mission structure
- It's going to be ready by the end of the year

**HESKEY WINNING** more than one cap for England, Dubya becoming the second Bush to bat for America, *PC ZONE* paying our freelancers month in, month out... It seems that some people never learn from their mistakes, so it's refreshing to see that Raven appears to be completely on track with *Jedi Academy*, the next installment in its *Star Wars* FPS franchise.

You see, when Richie Shoemaker reviewed the last version, *Jedi Outcast*, for us he imparted the following pearls of



*Jedi Academy* will allow you to combine Force Powers.

wisdom (and I'm paraphrasing wildly here before any of you dig out your old issues and write in to complain). "Without your lightsaber to hand, *Jedi Knight II* is a bit knob. Thankfully when you finally get hold of it, it gets a bit good."

And as these immortal words were penned in



A 'double ender' has a different meaning on Tatooine.



Again, players will have to choose Dark or Light Force powers.

*ZONE* it's fitting that Raven has listened and learned and announced *JK3* is going to put more stock in the third-person lightsaber sequences. You'll still get to wield other weapons (including the Wookiee bowcaster, Imperial repeater and a Destructive Electro-Magnetic Pulse gun) but estimates at the moment are putting the action 70/30 in favour of the glow sticks.

## BEARDS

And if that wasn't a big enough shock for diehard FPS fans, what about the revelation that *JK3* is going to sport role-playing elements? Instead of playing as Kyle Katarn, you get to create your own character, selecting gender, race, facial

features and clothing, as well as the type of saber you're going to swing. You then train to become a Jedi under the tutelage of Kyle Katarn and Luke Skywalker, running through missions unlocking new types of sabers and multiplayer modes.

Using a heavily modified version of the *Quake III* engine, we know the game's going to look the part but even at this stage we're pretty sure it's going to play like a dream. Moving away from the traditional FPS backdrop is a good move in our books and other features, such as being able to choose which mission you tackle next, rumours of a *Max Payne*-style Bullet-Time Force power (unconfirmed at the time of going to press) and the promise that levels are going to be twice as big as in the predecessor have got us rubbing our lightsabers in anticipation. **[P2]**



"We know the game's going to look the part but even at this stage we're pretty sure it's going to play like a dream"

Light show: you can now choose your own lightsaber design and can upgrade your weapon as you progress.

#### VISUALS

*Jedi Knight II* looked great and although *Jedi Academy* is using the same *Quake III* engine, Raven's heavy modifications mean that it won't look out of place when it is released around Christmas.

#### LEVELS

In a more open-ended structure you can decide which missions to play in which order. You can also expect the locales to be twice as big as in the previous game.

#### ILLUMINATI

The story kicks off just after events in *Jedi Knight II* - a mysterious group is discovered creating havoc throughout the galaxy, your job is to make sure order is restored.

#### LIGHTSABERS

You can customise your lightsaber from the start, and as you progress through missions you unlock new ones, like this double-ended beauty.

#### CREATE YOUR OWN CHARACTER

For the first time in a *Jedi Knight* game you get to decide who you want to play by selecting the species, gender, clothing, facial features and hair of your character.

#### THIRD-PERSON

We thought the best bits of *JKII* were when you were wielding your lightsaber in third-person and Raven obviously agrees. Expect to spend around 70 per cent of the game with the stick in your hand.



The MoD Mod...

FIRST  
Look!

# DAY OF DEFEAT

Exclusive! Valve's WWII *Half-Life* mod gets a standalone commercial release. We sent a scout in to check it out

HEAVY GUNNER Jamie Sefton

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

**DEVELOPER** Valve  
**PUBLISHER** Activision  
**EXPECTED RELEASE DATE** May  
**WEBSITE** [www.activision.com](http://www.activision.com)

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Retail version of the very popular WWII-themed *Half-Life* mod
- The Brits join the Americans and Germans
- Nine new DoD maps, with support for 32 players
- Enhanced graphics and sound effects
- Voice communication support



**THE WWII**-themed game invasion doesn't seem to be slowing down, with a fresh wave of titles arriving on the shores of Blighty very soon, including *Call Of Duty* (page 14), *Mortyr 2* (page 16) and *The Great Escape* (page 20). However, *Day Of Defeat* is different, as many of you out there in PC land will have already got your FPS gun smoking by downloading the superb – and free – home-brewed WWII multiplayer mod for *Half-Life*.

Now, developer Valve has signed a 'multi-title' distribution deal with Activision, and the first game to be released is a full commercial version of *Day Of Defeat*. PC ZONE visited Valve recently for an exclusive play and a chat with animator John Morello.

"We're still deep rooted in realism and sticking to how things work," said Morello, "but at the same time we've included and added stuff that makes *Day Of Defeat* a lot easier to play and enjoy."

## LIMEYS

*Day Of Defeat* is a team-based WWII-themed multiplayer game for up to 32 players, where you can join the Allied or Axis powers in one of many roles, such as a sniper or heavy gunner, and take part in campaigns over nine new maps. Each power has different classes of soldier, so the new British team (yep, we're involved for the first time) varies a great deal from the Americans and Germans. Players have to capture flagged areas of the map, and the first team to hold them all at the same time wins the game – rather like the Domination games in *UT* or *Quake III*.

We spent several hours embroiled in a series of battles set over a wide-variety of levels, all with multiple access points to each flag, making camping virtually



You just can't do a WWII shooter without a Normandy level.



Each soldier class has different weapon sets, so not everyone gets a bazooka!



Doffing one's cap to the enemy was once a proud tradition among British troops.

impossible. An easy-to-read map in the top right hand of the screen showed us where our nearby team-mates were, and an excellent voice-communications system made teamwork far simpler than in most other online shooters.

"All the player models, particle, weather and weapon effects have been updated for this version," continued Morello. "We've also added a 'Death Cam' – previously when you were killed, the screen just went black. Now we show who shot you, and where they were. Plus, we also have a larger map so you can see the position of snipers, meaning there'll be more communication between players."

As with the *Day Of Defeat* mod, the army fatigues, weapons and vehicles

have been modelled to resemble their real-life WWII counterparts. The sound effects are superb as well, with bullets whizzing and ricocheting round the levels in the frenetic battles, while the voices for each side were highly authentic too.

So does Morello and his development team, built from passionate coders who met online, believe that the commercial version of *Day Of Defeat* will appeal to PC gamers who are currently more attracted to *Counter-Strike*? "That's what we're hoping to see," answered Morello. "We're confident that when there's a box on the shelf we'll be much more visible to people, rather than before when you had to really know about it, or know someone who knew about it." **PCZ**





The retail *Day of Defeat* has all-new particle weather effects, for snow and rain in certain levels.

#### AREAS HELD

Each flag represents a strategic point on the level, and who controls them. A white flag means an area is neutral. Control them all to win immediately.

#### STRATEGIC POINTS

Represented by a flag that can be turned the colour of your team by walking your character up to it and waiting for five seconds. Heavy sandbags help you defend the area against enemy invaders.

#### BUILDINGS

Although the buildings aren't destructible, you can enter them to take cover or use them as short cuts to hard-to-get areas of the levels.

#### HEAVY MACHINE GUNNER

The heavy machine gun must be deployed to be fired accurately. Although static it cuts enemies to shreds. However, you're left vulnerable to attack from the flanks as you can't turn around.

#### CAMERA

Numerous camera angles are provided – including free look – but the best addition is a new 'Death Cam' that shows exactly who shot you and where they were at the time of your expiration.

Free Look

#### RULE BRITANNIA

The British enter the fray for the retail version of *DoD*, joining the Yanks and Germans, each with unique weapons.





ALL THE NEWS, VIEWS AND RUMOURS FROM THE WORLD OF PC GAMING

# BULLETIN



## LIFE AFFIRMING

■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR Jamie Sefton

▲ Hi there. There's one game responsible for me being here writing this column now – *Half-Life*. In late 1998, when I was a struggling writer/actor/employee of a London council, I decided to buy the latest 16Mb 3dfx card for my PC and a copy of Valve's new sci-fi first-person shooter just to see what all the fuss was about.

From the moment I was taken on the monorail ride into the Black Mesa Complex, I was astonished. Every millisecond of the game had been polished to perfection. *Half-Life* was incredible – there were so many great gaming moments: the first destruction of the base caused by Gordon Freeman's experiment; the leaping Head Crabs in the air ducts with the brilliant torch light effect; the Government troops' AI; the sound effects of the aliens, weapons and switches; the scientists in the lift plummeting to their deaths; the Man in the Suit.

I was so inspired, I decided to write a review and apply for a job at now defunct videogames mag *Arcade*, who were flummoxed enough to hire me as staff writer. *Half-Life* changed my life and it's incredibly exciting to be working on *PC ZONE* – the first magazine to break the story of the sequel. You can check out our exclusive hands-on preview and the sizzling screenshots on page 38.

In Bulletin we have some real treats, beginning with the first screenshots and interview on *Call Of Duty* (this page). Plus there's an interview with Blizzard's Bill Roper about *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne* (page 15) and new screenshots on Pivotal's *The Great Escape* (page 20), Disney's *Tron 2.0* (page 22), Take 2's 2003 line-up including *Hidden & Dangerous 2* (page 23) and *Star Trek: Elite Force II* (page 26). Enjoy.

## DUTY CALLS

WORLD EXCLUSIVE! PC ZONE REVEALS CALL OF DUTY, THE NEW WAR FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER FRANCHISE FROM INFINITY WARD



*Call Of Duty* will be an FPS franchise – not a single game. The wooden fence shatters to bits as the enemy fire at you.

**INFINITY WARD**, a studio set up last year comprising of 22 of the individuals who developed *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*, has announced its first project exclusively to *PC ZONE*. *Call Of Duty* is a new war-themed first-person shooter franchise that aims to provide gamers, for the first time, multiple perspectives in the theatre of war.

"Players have no idea what they're in store for with *Call Of Duty*," says Zied Rieke, lead designer at Infinity Ward. "You're experiencing intense, gritty battles, where the players feel a part of their squad through one conflict after another. No more über-soldiers winning the war by themselves, but rather a true Allied force of soldiers working together to overcome evil."

Rieke and the team believe the fact that you play *Call Of Duty* from the point of view of different nationalities and in different roles will bring a true epic scale to conflicts. "It's something you have to experience yourself. But once you do, suddenly all those other 'war games' seem like regular shooters."

In *Call Of Duty* the player is part of an AI-controlled team of soldiers, but what you have to do varies a great deal from mission to mission. You may be required to reel off machine-gun fire while your squad-mates drive, or sabotage equipment while your team (disguised in Nazi uniforms) order the poor guards around in German. "However, sometimes it's just all out war and your team-mates have to suppress the enemies and draw their fire while you try to flank them," adds Rieke.

Players are not required to order squad-mates around – there is usually an officer or NCO who gives orders to the rest of the squad – but Infinity Ward is confident that your computer-controlled comrades themselves are smart enough to deal with any kind of situation. "This game feels so much more like being in a real war than anything I've ever seen," continues Rieke. "It's not really something you can just explain, since it's a feeling built up from so many little elements all working together so well. We're really excited to kick-off the *Call Of Duty* series, and we're sure our game will set the tone right from the get-go." Watch out for next month's exclusive hands-on preview – only in *ZONE*.

## MISSION STATEMENT

ZIED RIEKE, LEAD DESIGNER AT INFINITY WARD DESCRIBES A MISSION IN CALL OF DUTY

"The attack on St Mere Eglise, a small village in Normandy a few miles from Utah beach is a great example of a typical mission. During the early morning hours of D-Day the Germans have three flakpanzers, which are anti-aircraft guns mounted on a tank chassis in the village, firing at the allied aircraft above. The player and his squad, as part of the 101st Airborne division, have been charged with taking out the flakpanzers and securing the village.

"While this mission takes place, St Mere Eglise is in ruins and burning out of control from allied bombing and tracers from the anti-aircraft guns. The

squad starts out moving across a field spotted with dead cows, with the fires of the village visible in front of them. Half-way across the field, the Germans unleash a barrage of fire with machine guns and mortars. To survive, the player must move quickly using cover, from cow to cow, and flank the machine gunners.

"After that, the village itself is guarded by platoons of Fallschirmjagers, the elite German paratroopers. The player and his squad engage them in vicious house-to-house combat, fighting through the entire village as it literally burns down to the ground all around them."



Cows – the first casualty of war.

■ Publisher: Activision  
■ Developer: Infinity Ward  
■ ETA: TBC  
■ Website: [www.infinityward.com](http://www.infinityward.com)





18

## SPECIAL REPORT

Developers keeping it real



21

## EMULATION ZONE

What's hot in emu's world?



23

## H&amp;D 2

Take 2's 2003 lineup



24

## PC ZONE CHARTS

Latest charts and release dates

# Freeze your orcs off

Exclusive! **PC ZONE** talks to Blizzard's Bill Roper about *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne*

**BLIZZARD NORTH'S** vice president Bill Roper recently hit town, so **PC ZONE** decided to brave a cold arse to sit down with him and discuss the upcoming expansion for *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne*. Brrrrrrrr...

**PCZ:** How does the plot of *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne* move on from *Warcraft III*?

**BILL:** The storyline follows on from where *WCIII* left off and revolves round a race between the Undead and the Night Elves to capture the ancient Frozen Throne. Stuck in between them as usual are the humans who are trying to stop them both. There's a separate campaign for the Orcs who are trying to establish their new home in Azeroth.

**PCZ:** What changes have you made to the races and heroes in *The Frozen Throne*?

**BILL:** We've got one new hero and two new units per race. We also have a new building, a shop for each race, that sells a mixture of common and specific items that players can buy. There are also neutral heroes, which you can hire and you'll find them all hanging out at the Cantina.

**PCZ:** What other features have you added?

**BILL:** Basically everything we can change or add-on to we have done. There are new tile sets, campaigns, changes to old characters and better balance all round. We've also added new battle.net stuff, including clan support that allows clans to have their own chat channels and ladders.

**PCZ:** Finally, how have you developed the in-game editor?

**BILL:** Players will have more freedom when creating maps and one of the big changes we made is that you can now link maps. So for example if you have your base on a central map, once you've built that up you can get pathways to other lands. Changes you make on one map will effect other maps so you could find a doorway on one map that you can't get through because it's being magically held shut by an arch-mage on another map and once you kill him, you can get through. We hope that all the changes will have the same effect on *Warcraft III* that *Brood Wars* did on *StarCraft*!

■ **Publisher:** VU Games

■ **Developer:** Blizzard

■ **ETA:** July

■ **Website:** [www.blizzard.com](http://www.blizzard.com)



The Blood Mage is a new character.



The mountain giants come out to play.



Snazzy graphics effects are par for the course in *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne*.

# God from the Machine

WARREN SPECTOR ON ION STORM'S *DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR*

AS WE REVEALED back in our 10th Birthday Issue, the conspiracy-stuffed first-person adventure *Deus Ex: Invisible War* is already promising to surpass the mould-breaking original. "*Deus Ex* is for the casual gamer and the hardcore gamer," says studio director Warren Spector. "If you're interested in all of that detail, it's there. We know so much more about the world of *Deus Ex* - we know what's happening in the asteroid belt, we know what's happening in Africa, what styles are in fashion - we have a wealth of info about this universe, just to make it seem like a real place."

*Deus Ex: Invisible War* is set 15 years after the original adventure in a world corrupted by dangerous nano-technology and stars a next-generation clone of augmented hero JC Denton, known as Alex D. As in the original, *Invisible War* allows you to power up Alex D (who can be male or female) with bio-mods that can improve sight, sound, strength and a host of other physiological characteristics. We'll have more on *Deus Ex: Invisible War* in next month's E3 videogames show special.



One of the new screenshots unveiled by Mr Spector.

"Time for your sponge bath, Alex."

■ **Publisher:** Eidos

■ **Developer:** Ion Storm

■ **ETA:** Q3 2003

■ **Website:** [www.deusex2.com](http://www.deusex2.com)



## SHORTS

## A LOAD OF KOCH



Koch Media has recently signed up several PC games from rival German developer/publisher JoWood, including *Aquanox 2*, *Cold Zero: The Last Stand* and *Industry Giant 2 Gold*, all due for release this autumn. However, out soon is the zoo-sim *Wildlife Park* – we'll be reviewing it next month.

## PLAYING WITH FIRE



Ukrainian developer GSC Game World has released more shots of its first-person shooter *FireStarter*. Set in the near future, the game requires you to recover your trapped consciousness from an AI in 48 hours. Players can choose from five characters, with the action taking place in four worlds full of vicious aliens. Fire up [www.firestarter-game.com](http://www.firestarter-game.com) for more pics.

## IMPERIUM GALACTICA 3 – NOT!



Developer Mithis and German publisher CDV have changed the name of their sci-fi RTS *Imperium Galactica 3* to *Galaxy Andromeda*, after negotiations to keep the old name were scuppered by current license-holder, Infogrames. *Galaxy Andromeda* now has a revamped graphic engine, more than 30 missions and multiplayer games. Check out [www.galaxyandromeda.de](http://www.galaxyandromeda.de) for more info.

## AGE OF MYTHOLOGY COMPO WINNERS



Congratulations to the winners of our *Age of Mythology* competition from issue #125: D Ellis, Hants; Ruth Miller, Middx; Craig Smith, Co Durham; Lorraine Crispin, Plymouth; E Hutchinson, Sheffield; Steve McPartlin, Hartlepool; Jackie O'Neal, Brentford; Dave Burchell, Kent; Pete Smith, Northants; Richard Kaye, Sussex. All ten winners get the superb limited boxset of *Age of Mythology*.

## THE REICH STUFF

## MIRAGE REVEALS MORE ABOUT NAZI-PUNISHING FPS SEQUEL MORTYR 2

**NAZIS HAVE** to be the best baddies ever. There's just something about those cheeky psychopathic Hitler-worshippers that makes you want to grab the nearest machine gun and riddle their starch-pressed, swastika-adorned uniforms with bullet holes.

Well, if killing these WWII enemies floats your *Das Boot*, then the news that Polish developer Mirage is working on a sequel to its 1999 first-person shooter *Mortyr* will be

welcome news. *Mortyr* showed an alternative reality where the Third Reich had managed to win WWII by using time travel. In *Mortyr 2*, your hero, Sven, has discovered that the Nazis have now invented a superweapon – the Wunderwaffe – which must be destroyed or the world will be plunged into Armageddon.

"Our new Ar [Argon] engine has been made from scratch to cover the latest hardware and software," says Mirage's product manager

Andrzej Wilewski. "The graphics approach is very different to the original, having more complicated environments displayed with real-time lighting and realistic shadows."

Levels range from the fjords of Norway, to a castle in Poland, via the forests of Yugoslavia. "There'll be three kinds of weapons," continues Wilewski. "First-person weapons such as a knife or sniper rifle, static fixed weapons you can control, plus vehicle weapons, for example when a player rides the Tiger Tank and fires their cannons."

*Mortyr 2* will be single-player only, but the team are also planning a multiplayer add-on for release a few months after the game's launch later this year – depending on when a publisher can be tied up. Look out for the playable demo over the summer, when you can check out the game's credentials for yourself.



Those nasty Nazis are back in *Mortyr 2* and this time they've got a superweapon...

- Publisher: TBA
- Developer: Mirage
- ETA: Christmas 2003
- Website: [www.mortyr.com.pl](http://www.mortyr.com.pl)

## LOOKS THAT KILL

## TOP POLISH MODEL DRAFTED INTO FPS NINA: AGENT CHRONICLES



*Nina: Agent Chronicles*' star is based on top Polish crumpet Iza Czarnecka.

**POLISH DEVELOPER** City Interactive is saucing up the FPS genre by employing the 'talents' of nubile model Iza Czarnecka. *Nina: Agent Chronicles* is a 3D action/adventure set in Afghanistan and starring a female anti-terrorist agent who is gifted with the ability to read minds.

The stunning Iza has been photographed and motion-captured for the role of Nina, with the elegant LithTech graphics engine providing the polygon-pushing power. *Agent Chronicles*' gameplay promises full-on blasting, combined with episodes of stealth and puzzle-solving, in both night and day missions.

As well as being able to use the two weapon slots to dish out East European vengeance,

Nina can exercise her paranormal powers to touch people and scan their brains for information. Approaching an enemy slowly and pressing the action key results in a neat cut-scene, featuring valuable visual clues. However, unlike Derren Brown's famous mind-reading technique, this hands-on approach results in death for any participants. Due for release at the end of May for less than 20 quid, we'll hopefully have a review of *Nina: Agent Chronicles* next issue.

- Publisher: City Interactive
- Developer: City Interactive
- ETA: May 31
- Website: [www.city-interactive.com](http://www.city-interactive.com)



Early code has omitted a crouch action. Odd for a stealth game...





# UNLUCKY FOR SOME

UBI SOFT RELEASES NEW SCREENSHOTS ON ITS CEL-SHADED SHOOTER XIII



Comic relief! Graphic novel fans will love XIII's graphics.

**FOR THOSE** of you afeard of Roman numerals, Ubi Soft's gorgeous-looking cel-shaded FPS XIII is pronounced '13', which, apparently, is the name of one of the biggest comic books in Belgium. Impressed yet? Well, you will be when you direct your peepers towards these beautiful new screens fresh from the company's French development studio.

The game begins with the classic movie-plot cliché of a man who wakes up with amnesia, not knowing who he is or why there are numerous people trying to kill him – the only clue is a mysterious

'XIII' tattoo on his chest and a key to a safety deposit box.

Set against the background of a US president's assassination, XIII aims to be a cool, conspiracy-filled shooter with a smart graphic-novel style. You have access to traditional guns, including sniper rifles and bazookas, as well as improvised weapons, such as shards of glass, chairs and ashtrays.

Action is accompanied by visual representations of the sound effects in the game, so you'll see onomatopoeic words like 'Bam!' peppering the screen

when you shoot a weapon, for example. Also, this original gameplay convention is used to give your character a 'sixth sense' to detect approaching enemies.

Multiplayer games will, of course, be available, including your classic Deathmatch and Capture the Flag levels, plus several co-operative missions. More on XIII very soon...

■ **Publisher:** Ubi Soft  
■ **Developer:** Ubi Soft  
■ **ETA:** September  
■ **Website:** www.ubi.com



Poor old Telly Savalas. He's a Good Cop too... (right)

## Good Cop. Bad Cop

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A MONTH ON PC ZONE

### GOOD COP

*Half-Life 2.* One word – amazing. It's going to be worth every millisecond of the four-year wait.



*Sunshine!* Loads of beers outdoors with bonnie girls in skimpy tops. Makes you glad to be alive.

*Having a sneak peek at Infinity Ward's stunning new game* – see page 14.

*Too exciting!* Our E3 games conference flight tickets to Los Angeles have been booked. Prepare for the PC games onslaught next issue...

### BAD COP



*Jamie 'Jackhammer' Sefton nutmegging Dave 'Wondergoal' Woods on the footie pitch* – a sackable offence.

*This issue's two-week magazine deadline.* It was a good idea at the time.

*Endlessly crashing office PCs.* Now it's getting personal.

*The London tube system.* If you don't have to use it every day, be very bloody grateful.

Good Cop: *Kojak* Bad Cop: *Dirty Harry* (from, er, *Kojak* and *Dirty Harry*) – sent in by K Denton, Salford. Send in your suggestions for next month's Good Cop and Bad Cop to win a PC ZONE goodie-bag!

## COMPETITION



# Win Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance!

TEN COPIES OF KONAMI'S STEALTH CLASSIC METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE UP FOR GRABS...

**SNAAAAAAAAAAAAAKE!** Legendary Japanese games producer Hideo Kojima's magnificent stealth sequel *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance* has finally sneaked on to the PC, having gained 83 per cent and a PC ZONE Essential award back in our 10th Birthday issue #127. The *Substance* edition of MGS2 is an enhanced package, featuring the single-player game, plus a host of extras, including VR training missions, unlockable characters and other bonus modes.

Starring moody agent Solid Snake and his fey, blonde-haired stand-in Raiden, *Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance* is a superb mix of conspiracy-fuelled plots, twisted enemy characters, serious futuristic weaponry and equipment, filmic cut-scenes and that now-famous sneak 'em up gameplay. Konami has donated no less than ten copies of MGS2: *Substance* to give away to you very fortunate PC ZONE readers – all you have to do to stand a chance of winning is to answer the simple question on the right and send it on a postcard to the usual PC ZONE address.



### WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE NUKE-FIRING METAL GEAR ROBOT IN MGS2: SUBSTANCE?

A: Trevor  
B: Ray  
C: Robbie

Send your answer on a postcard, along with all of the information requested, to the address below:

■ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18).

■ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd.

■ Please indicate whether or not you are a current subscriber to PC ZONE.

**Send your entry to:**

MGS2: *Substance* competition, PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JD. (Closing date: Thursday, May 29, 2003).

**Terms and conditions:** Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.



# THE REALITY OF WAR

THE TRUTH HURTS BUT TECHNICAL ADVISORS CAN DELIVER A DOSE OF REALITY TO AWAKEN THE MOST BATTLE WEARY OF PC GAMERS, REPORTS PAVEL BARTER

**SPECIAL REPORT**

**"IT'S ALL ABOUT** survival and out-thinking the enemy," the 6ft 2in Vietnam vet hollered at his newest recruits as they perspired under the weight of their backpacks and nursed their shoulders from rifle recoil. "Maybe you oughta understand that running 50 metres causes your heart-rate to increase, so you won't be as accurate with those guns. Maybe you should experience the effects of weather and darkness and terrain on your ability to fight. Hey you, pencil-neck, spit out that gum and give me 20!"

When instructed by a battle-hardened marine with the ability to crush a soldier from 30ft with one throaty bark, boot-camp bravado is a scarce commodity. But these were no ordinary troops; they were *Medal Of Honor* programmers, eager to learn the realities of combat for the benefit of their game... at least they had been

historical intimacy and nail-biting tension. Extensive research improves gameplay. The employment of technical advisors, who really know their stuff, means you might actually learn something while blowing up bad guys on your monitor.

## A HISTORY LESSON

Like a hairy mole on the nose of a supermodel, game inconsistencies can ruin the bigger picture. Erudite Software's *North vs South*, a strategy game based on the American Civil War, wore its lack of historical research on its Yankee sleeve. The battle maps looked more like your gran's back garden than the geographical reality of locations like Gettysburg. And what was up with those rectangular-shaped Confederate army flags that - you guessed it - never really existed?

Great development teams do their homework, even if it means leaving the security of their air-conditioned offices and dirtying their bibs in the outside world. The crew behind *Vietcong* (Gathering) donned their combats and took off to Vietnam where they visited Ho Chi Minh City and scrambled down a recreated Vietcong tunnel. Biologists who had studied local fauna provided them with a wealth of photographs, video and audio recordings, so Nam's sweaty environments might be accurately captured in the game.

"Some projects are easy to research," says Simon Humphreys,

assistant development manager of *IGI 2: Covert Strike*. "If I wanted to learn about snooker, I could visit the local snooker hall and spend a few days smacking balls around the table. When you want to learn about stealth or combat tactics or what it's like to actually kill someone, things are a bit more complex. You can't just pop down to the local gun range and start shooting people up. You need to have contact with someone who has actually been covert in enemy territory, who has been in combat situations and, ultimately, who has killed people."

An early LucasArts title, *Battlehawks 1942*, drafted Lt Colonel Richard H Best (a WWII veteran) as technical advisor. Likewise, Steven Spielberg was keen to recruit Captain Dye as consultant for Dreamworks' *Medal Of Honor*. After all,



Chris Ryan - he can write and shoot.



Dale Dye kicks Hanks' ass.



eager until Captain Dale Dye began tearing them new a-holes with his crash course in military training.

It's this level of reality investment which the *Medal Of Honor* franchise, and other titles give contemporary PC war games, their

**"You can't just pop down to the local gun range and start shooting people"**

**SIMON HUMPHREYS**  
INNERLOOP



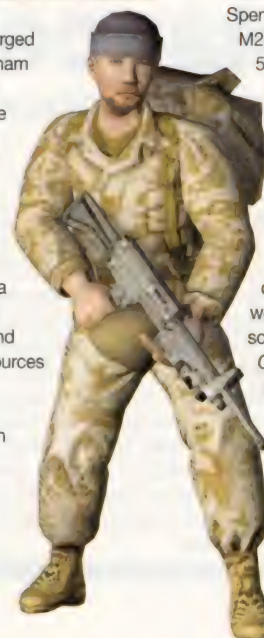
(Left) Ex-Gulf War I veteran Cameron Spence.



War games - all too real at the moment.

this soldier not only emerged from the ravages of Vietnam with three Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star, but he called Tom Hanks "Turd No. 1" while training actors on the set of *Saving Private Ryan*.

The developer behind *Conflict: Desert Storm* wanted to create a fun but authentic squad combat experience and used a wide variety of sources when devising original gameplay concepts. Pivotal's studio was soon littered with books on weapons, armoured vehicles, uniforms, architecture, Middle Eastern cities, deserts,



planes, and missiles. "We also had a technical adviser, Cameron Spence, who'd fought in the Gulf," says producer Tim Maughan.

Cameron Spence spent the bulk of the Gulf War behind enemy lines as a member of 22nd SAS Sabre Squadron. Been there, done that, and wearing the bloodstained



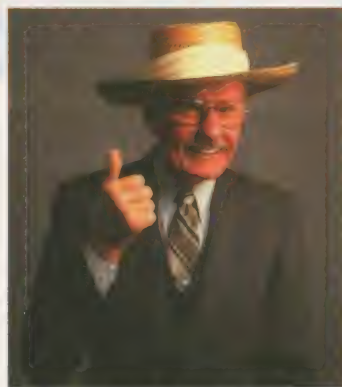
Xtreme Air Racing takes to the skies.

T-shirt, he ensured that the correct missile sights, scud convoys, aircraft targets and radar installations were all in place. Spence's favourite shooter - the M203 (an armalite rifle firing 5.56mm ammunition with a fixed grenade launcher) - was also accounted for on his orders.

"We spent many hours going over aspects of the different missions trying to enhance wherever possible the realism, from voice commands to weapons, as well as putting together tactical scenarios. The realism built into *Conflict: Desert Storm*, with particular attention to the weapons and Kuwait city, is quite excellent," says Spence.

This (scarily topical) level of realism was replicated in *IGI 2* with the presence of another ex-SAS operative,





**Bob Hoover, pilot extraordinaire.**

Chris Ryan. The fact that Ryan had undertaken missions in some of the locations depicted in the game was of added benefit. "I was able to provide detailed information about weapons, how they're used, their firing capabilities and the sound they make," he says. "I also looked at how the enemy AI reacts within the game and more than 20 new combat behaviours were added following my advice."

#### KEEPING IT REAL

War games aren't the only genre that deserves friendly advice. *FIFA 99* would have been a tad more realistic had someone pointed out that Milan's San Siro Stadium was missing the roof or Arsenal's kit was a couple of seasons out of date. Perhaps *NASCAR 2000* would have benefited if it were politely informed that cars don't really soar 50 or 60ft into the air at the slightest contact. After all, *Champ Man 4* was improved vastly with help from Republic of Ireland star Ray Houghton, who spent countless hours perfecting player positioning in free kicks and corners.

As for Colin McRae: "I mainly help the developers on the handling of the car. I've driven the virtual cars throughout the course of the project and have provided continuous feedback commenting on the car, the tracks, the surfaces, how the car behaves... I haven't really talked to other drivers about the game but I know that my team really enjoy playing it."

Simulations like *Xtreme Air Racing* certainly benefit from the input of experienced aviators. Bob Hoover, one of the world's great pilots says: "I flew the game's various aircraft, offered the developers suggestions on flying characteristics, gave them feedback on engine handling, emergency procedures and racing strategy." He also recorded Hoover's Hints: a bit like having Bob himself in the back seat during a race.

Any self-respecting war game will vouch for the merits of a technical consultant, and many titles that venture nowhere near the battlefield could use them too – even if it means the developers catch trenchfoot and are humiliated by a drill instructor. All's fair, after all, in PC game love and war.

**Colin McRae, our favourite dour Scot.**



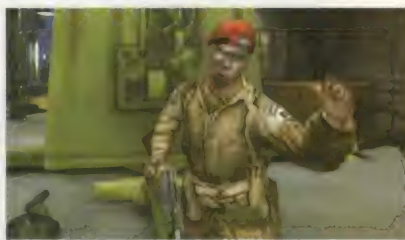
## REALITY CHECK

### FIVE OF THE BEST PC GAMES TO HAVE BENEFITED FROM EXPERT ADVICE



#### SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

The exploits of real-life mercenary and technical advisor, John Mullins, has enough blood and gristle to induce post-traumatic stress disorder.



#### MEDAL OF HONOR

"Those of us who know something of history should not miss a chance to help make the videogame medium a truthful experience," says Russ Lee of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, who's helped advise *MOH*.



#### IGI 2: COVERT STRIKE

Fill the shoes of ex-SAS operative Chris Ryan, fighting crime in destinations like Ukraine, Libya and the South China Sea.



#### CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

The world's most accurate football management simulation has benefited from Ray Houghton's tweaks, tucks and insight into the world of the pros.



#### COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

The courses are beautifully designed and the driving model, thanks to Col, is so authentic you'll get carsick.

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Simon Bradbury designer and team programmer at Firefly

## DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME

**What PC games are you playing at the moment?**

C&C: Generals, Warcraft III, occasionally I'm used as cannon fodder in Battlefield 1942.

**What was the last videogame that you finished?**

Stronghold! Before that... erm... StarCraft or Dungeon Keeper 2 probably (I'm a lot busier than I used to be).

**What is your favourite game of all time?**

Populous or SimCity, mainly because I found them both so different at the time.

**What in your career are you most proud of?**

I was ecstatic when I sold my first game (Elf for the Atari ST) to Tynesoft back in the '80s for 2,000 quid. But I was equally proud when Firefly's first title, Stronghold, received a platinum award in Germany last year. We'd all put so much into it and so much rested on it... Fifteen years ago, life was so much simpler!

**Who do you most admire in the industry and why?**

From a designer's standpoint, it has to be Will Wright... that guy just doesn't care!

**What has been the PC's biggest contribution to videogaming?**

In my book, the PC has been the spiritual home of gaming ever since the early '90s, with pretty much all innovation (genres and technology) stemming from it.

**What is your company's philosophy?**

It doesn't have to be totally original, but it needs to be fresh if it's going to grip all the staff over what is now a very long development cycle.

**What's the best thing about your job?**

Getting to make lots of big decisions about the shape and detail of a game.

**What's the worst thing about your job?**

Having to take responsibility for the above.

**What project are you working on at the moment?**

Space Colony is our current labour of love. We are attempting to merge a people-sim with a classic builder game, all set in an alien-infested world – so far the results are making us laugh!

**What, in your opinion, is the next big thing in PC gaming?**

See above! Well OK, I don't know. But that's what I quite like about PC gaming...

# POW WOW!

EXCLUSIVE! PIVOTAL'S *THE GREAT ESCAPE* – BRAND-NEW SCREENSHOTS AND INTERVIEW

**BASED ON** the hit movie of the same name, starring Steve McQueen, *The Great Escape* is the latest action game from Conflict: Desert Storm developer Pivotal. *The Great Escape* offers you stealthy gameplay as you try to flee from the infamous WWII POW camp Stalag Luft III, plus action sequences where you can get behind the wheel of vehicles, such as tanks and jeeps, as well as shooting your way out of trouble, as you and your fellow prisoners go on the run from the Nazis.

"The design of the game mirrors the narrative of the film: the daring plans, the British tenacity for escaping, forgers, disguises and chases," says lead designer Tomas Rawlings. "We don't have many typical missions, but an example might be using a fellow prisoner of war to distract a guard while you sneak into his quarters, or stealing an armoured personal carrier and taking the Germans for a ride."

Players are able to control four main characters – Sedgwick (an Australian skilled in sabotage), MacDonald (a Scottish officer, who can speak German), Hendley (a pickpocket who also leads 'Blythe', the blind forger through a couple of levels), and of course, the Cooler King himself, Hiltz. "[The] Steve McQueen [character] is, and

could only ever be, Steve McQueen, and so we've used his likeness and voice samples from the film," continues Rawlings. "And yes, the player does get to steal a motorbike and attempt to jump the border fences like at the end of the film itself." *The Great Escape* will be previewed in full next issue, just as soon as we can get that damn theme tune out our heads...

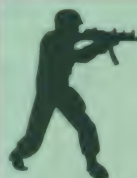
■ **Publisher:** SCI  
■ **Developer:** Pivotal  
■ **ETA:** June  
■ **Website:** [www.pivotalgames.com](http://www.pivotalgames.com)



'The Cooler King' McQueen just before being shot by Nazis.



Build a snow Hitler for fun.



## From Hero to Zero

NEW SCREENSHOTS OF COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO RELEASED

**WE'RE VERY** excited indeed about *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* – the single-player, stand-alone version of the world's most popular online shooter. After we broke the exclusive news in issue #125 that Ritual Entertainment had taken the reigns of the game from Gearbox, there's been no new information on the game's release, until now.

*Condition Zero* is currently pencilled in for a 'summer' release, so the team at Ritual Entertainment has just delivered us a very pleasing batch of new screenshots. These images show off the game's engine, that will carry nearly double the detail of the current online *Counter-Strike*, and with no loss of performance.

Single-player objectives will copy the *Counter-Strike* multiplayer gameplay modes, with the addition of special AI systems, scripted events and animation, plus at least ten new weapons, including radio-controlled explosives and a rather fetching blowtorch. We'll have another update in our E3 special next issue after you've had a chance to peruse 12 pages on a certain other *Half-Life*-inspired title, starting on page 38.

■ **Publisher:** VJ Games ■ **Developer:** Ritual  
■ **ETA:** Summer ■ **Website:** [www.cs-conditionzero.com](http://www.cs-conditionzero.com)



*Condition Zero* is more detailed than its online equivalent. Black Mesa is just over the ridge on the right.

?  
**TRUE OR FALSE**  
Ritual's FPS  
will be backwards  
compatible with  
*Counter-Strike*.  
(answer below)

Answer: TRUE – A patch will be released for CS very soon.



# EMULATION ZONE

Breaking news from the world of emulation, with retro reanimator **Stuart Campbell**

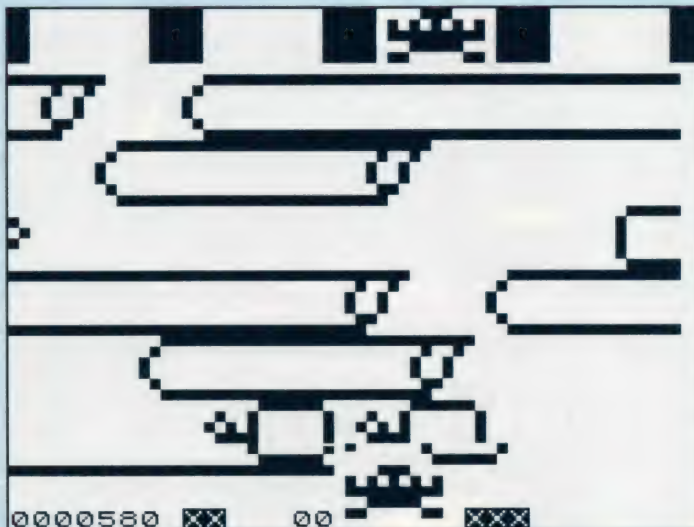
## TURNING DEFENCE TO ATTACK

As time marches on (viable gaming emulation has been with us for nearly a decade now) and achievements mount up, it's getting harder and harder for would-be emu coders to find something to emulate that hasn't already been done. It's probably safe to say, though, that Russell Marks has pulled off something that, if not for him, would almost certainly never have been thought of by anyone else.

In the short but seminal lifespan of Sir Clive Sinclair's groundbreaking ZX81, arguably the machine's greatest weakness (despite the stiff competition from blocky black and white graphics and a 'touch sensitive' keyboard made from dead flesh) was its total lack of sound. Quicksilver, a major publisher of the 8-bit era, attempted to address this problem with a hardware peripheral that plugged into the back of the 81 and supplied pretty decent sonic capabilities (they were actually better than the ones that would later be built in to the Spectrum) for games that supported the facility.

To the best of Emu Zone's knowledge, though, there was only ever one such game (coincidentally, a figure which more or less tallies with the number of people who bought the QS Sound Board) – Quicksilver's own *QS Defenda*, a simplistic interpretation of the similarly-titled Williams arcade classic. Marks didn't let this extremely niche market put him off, though, and in the heroic spirit of rescuing the history that the games industry would let die forever, set about emulating the system.

To make things even trickier, the plucky coder realised that the only way to get the game fully emulated with the sound was actually to write an emulator for it piggybacked on the shoulders of



Very early 3D perspective in *Frogger*.

another emulator. For technical reasons that Emu Zone will leave to the game's built-in documentation, the system could only be properly emulated via the Spectrum 128, Sinclair's fairly successful upgrade of the original Speccy which featured the popular AY3-8912 sound chip (as also seen in the QS Sound Board) in place of the Speccy's primitive beeper.

So the intrepid author created a single piece of code that contained the game, documentation and inbuilt emulation of not one but two separate pieces of hardware, and could be loaded like a normal tape file into Speccy emulators like Spectaculator. (And, indeed, should also work should you load it into a real Spectrum 128, making it the first emulator to run on the long-dead machine. Now THAT'S what Emu Zone calls retro.)

The game, it probably goes without saying, is a bit rubbish. (Marks has also ported a couple of other ZX81 titles to the Speccy, including the classic *3D Monster Maze* and the rare official Sega conversion of *Frogger*, but none involving fancy extra hardware). But the sheer love in resurrecting something

## WHAT IS EMULATION?



By installing an emulator, you can run games that were programmed for different platforms – such as coin-ops – in their original form.

The games come in the form of a ROM (Read Only Memory) which you load into the emulator to run. There are legal issues though, and unless you own the original game, it's often against the law to download a ROM. For that reason, we can't give you links to ROMs, though we can to the emulators themselves.

that so few people have even heard of, never mind experienced, is exactly what makes emulation such a heart-warming part of gaming to be involved with, and Emulation Zone takes off its fanciest hat and tips it lavishly in Russell Marks' direction.

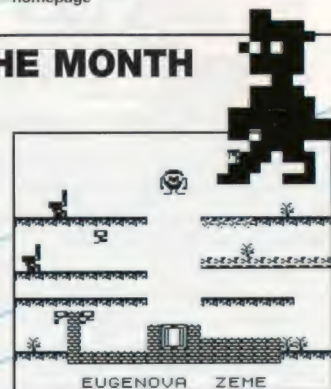
## LINKS

<http://emul8.xlabs.sk/topgames/zx81conversions/index.html> – ZX81-to-Spectrum conversions  
[www.spectaculator.com](http://www.spectaculator.com) – Spectaculator homepage

## EMULATION OF THE MONTH

### MANIC MINER (ZX81, 1999)

1999? Surely some mistake? But, in fact, no. While Emu Zone is saluting the mighty monochrome marvel that was the ZX81, we can't help but shed a silent tear for the premature end that the machine met after just a couple of years of life, as the all-colour, all-high-res, all-sound antics of the Spectrum cut the 81 off in its prime, just as coders were starting to make it do incredible things. The greatest of these was the implementation of high-resolution graphics, something the 81 was never designed to do (its native resolution was a stunning 22x32 huge square pixels). A couple of simple but quite successful commercial games were released using the technique by a company called Software Farm, but



Emu Zone Polish For Beginners #1 – "Eugene's Lair"

the advent of the Speccy killed the 81-focused firm off. Even more impressively, though, one keen coder subsequently showed off just what the ZX81 could have done by converting 11 of the 20 levels of Speccy classic *Manic Miner* to the little machine (in what appears to be Polish, or possibly Czech). Emu Zone is only sad that it didn't support the QS Sound Board too.

## LINKS

[jswremakes.emuunlim.com/Systems/-ZX81ManicMiner](http://jswremakes.emuunlim.com/Systems/-ZX81ManicMiner)  
[www.delihez.demon.nl/](http://www.delihez.demon.nl/) – Xtender2 emulator homepage  
[www.btinternet.com/~techworld/softwarefarm.htm](http://www.btinternet.com/~techworld/softwarefarm.htm) – Software Farm page

QS Defenda

1. Start game
2. Documentation



Emu Zone's kind of title screen. Who needs 128-bit colour?



# Manhattan Meltdown

REBEL-ROUSING SCREENSHOTS FROM IO INTERACTIVE'S *FREEDOM: SOLDIERS OF LIBERTY*

**IO INTERACTIVE** – makers of the *Hitman* games – recently dropped by to demonstrate *Freedom: Soldiers of Liberty*. The squad-based third-person shooter, previously known as *Freedom: The Battle For Liberty Island*, has gone through quite a few changes in the last few months, with the team dumping turn-based strategy elements in favour of more fast-paced, user-friendly action.

Set in a parallel universe where the Soviet Union became the world's greatest power after WWII, *Soldiers of Liberty* stars a plumber called Chris, who's drawn into a battle to liberate New York from the evil Russkies. "You lead your troops on the fly with a simple command system that allows you to simultaneously issue orders, while engaging the enemy," says designer Martin Guldback.

This is done by simply approaching a freedom fighter, recruiting them and giving them orders such as "Follow Me", which is signified by an icon above their heads. "The AI in the game is quite believable," continues Guldback. "You'll see friendly and enemy soldiers making effective use of cover and peering round corners, as well as taking control of stationary guns to back you up." Successful missions result in an increase in Chris the plumber's charisma rating, which, in turn, means players can recruit more fighters – up to 12 at once in online games. Watch out for a more in-depth preview soon.

- **Publisher:** EA
- **Developer:** IO Interactive
- **ETA:** Autumn
- **Website:** [www2.ioi.dk](http://www2.ioi.dk)



First-person mode offers sharp shooting.



The firefights look amazing – and they're all directed by you.



**It portrays war as the only way to resolve conflicts. It generally advocates war, and it gives military force an aesthetic appeal.**

Director of the German Federal Bureau, Elke Monssen-Engberding, criticising EA's C&C: Generals, which has recently been added to a German government list of games it considers violent and unsuitable for children.

**I'm personally bored with games that are all about guns and shooting and baseball bats and stealing cars. It's just an accumulated 'Oh my God, do I have to do this again?', you know? I mean how many different ways can you paint a blood splat on a TV screen?'**

We suspect Ion Storm's Warren Spector has played enough GTA III to last him a lifetime.

**I've eaten a llama steak, but have had to draw the line at roasted guinea pig.**

PC ZONE's Steve Hill, currently on holiday in the wilds of South America, reporting back on the fast food in Peru. Maybe Jeff Minter should invite him round for tea?



Each weapon has three levels of power-ups.



Light cycles courtesy of original Tron designer Syd Mead.

## ALL SYSTEMS GLOW

THE LATEST NEWS ON MONOLITH'S LIGHT-FANTASTIC FPS, *TRON 2.0*

**PC ZONE** recently visited *No One Lives Forever*-developer Monolith in Seattle to check on the progress of its latest first-person shooter *Tron 2.0*. Set 20 years after the original movie, *Tron 2.0* focuses on Jet, the son of Tron programmer Alan Bradley (played by Bruce Boxleitner in the film), who is zapped into a digital world to look for his missing father and defeat the sinister fCon corporation.

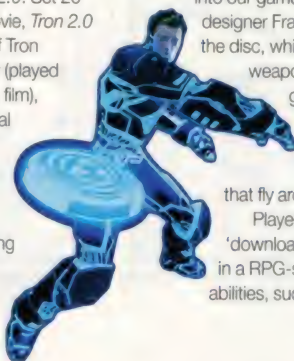
"Even though everything in *Tron 2.0* is updated and fresh, we still have

these really nice ties to the past – not for nostalgic reasons, but because they're just plain cool and carry the *Tron* spirit into our game," says lead game designer Frank Rooke. "We have the disc, which was a very iconic weapon in the movie, in our game. You'll also see the light cycles and tanks, plus those huge Recognizers that fly around."

Players will be able to 'download' programs for Jet in a RPG-style to give him extra abilities, such as more speed or

bigger jumps, and to create custom-made profiles for stealthy or weapons-blasting gameplay, depending on the style of level. Monolith is also adding multiplayer arena games for up to 16 players, but it's now unlikely the light cycle races will be playable online because any lag at all means the split-second timing required would be ruined. However, *Tron 2.0* is still looking hugely impressive – we'll have a full hands-on preview next issue.

- **Publisher:** Disney
- **Developer:** Monolith
- **ETA:** Summer
- **Website:** [www.tron20.net](http://www.tron20.net)





# THE MUNICH GAMES

PC ZONE SAILS TO GERMANY TO VIEW TAKE 2'S LATEST CREATIONS

**MUNICH, HOME** of beer, buxom Bavarian waitresses and dumplings the size of a baby's head – but also the setting for this year's Take 2 pre-E3 showcase of its upcoming titles. All the PC games on show were pretty strong, although there sadly wasn't as much *Hidden & Dangerous 2* as people had hoped for, with a short showcase of a group of troops moving up a valley, taking out German troops along the way. However, it was a great environment for showing off *H&D2*'s superb-looking game engine. *Space Colony* was the surprise gem of the event, though, with an aura that was comfortably reminiscent of Bullfrog's old stable of titles, with a promising dollop of old-fashioned gaming humour. So, before we start on about the size of the sausages out there, let's get to the games...

## HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2 ILLUSION SOFTWARES Q4

If there's one thing that's as good as playing a solo character, it has to be playing four of them, as we found out in the original *Hidden & Dangerous*. Now, the sequel is about to remind us how much fun tactical, squad-based shooters can be. Like its predecessor, *H&D2* takes place during WWII, this time, between 1941 and 1945, in secret team-based, cross-continental missions. The engine is breathtaking and almost photo-realistic in outdoor environments, where your troops leave tracks on the ground as they pass. Alongside this, you'll be able to play through several game modes, including carnage mode where your only real objective is to kill everyone you meet.



Snowball fight! Photo-realistic fighting in *H&D2*.



*Space Colony* – think *Aliens* crossed with *Red Dwarf*.

## SPACE COLONY FIREFLY STUDIOS Q4

The spirit of *Theme Hospital* and *Dungeon Keeper* lives on in this space-colony simulation from Firefly Studios (the makers of *Stronghold* and *Stronghold: Crusader*), and the game takes its influences from the likes of *Red Dwarf* and *Aliens*. The object of the game is to hone your motley crew of colonists (and there are up to 20 characters, all with their own individual personality traits, likes and dislikes) into a lean, mean, space-savvy team that can harvest their home planet's resources, keep themselves safe from alien invaders, encourage space tourists to visit their colony and still have time to get jiggy in the disco or go for a round of lunar golf.

## AGE OF WONDERS: SHADOW MAGIC TRIUMPH STUDIOS Q3

The battle between the warring wizards in the original *Age Of Wonders: The Wizard's Throne* has left a world torn asunder. Now a new war has broken out between the old wizards and the new world of the humans, and the ripples of that war have left a path open between the world of light and the shadow realm. In *Shadow Magic*, the second part of the *Wizard's Throne* story, you'll have to traverse both worlds using 150 units and 12 races, which now include the new highly portable Nomad race. Other features also include an editor, which allows you to create and link scenarios and customise units and spells.



The wizards are at war with humans in *Shadow Magic*.

## RAILROAD TYCOON 3 POPTOP SOFTWARE Q4

If you like nothing better than some good locomotive action, then you may closely resemble Martin Korda's character on last month's back page, or you might just be a fan of *Railroad Tycoon*. If you're the latter, then listen up as the latest version of *RT* is on its way to you, and this time, it's coming at ya in 3D. The game features 45 steam, electric and diesel trains from the 1830s up to the present day, from North America, Europe and Asia. Developer Poptop is attempting to create a living breathing, more immersive world, so you can expect features such as dynamic lighting, weather and flexible gameplay options.



Trainspotting – without the heroin and the Scots.



## DANGEROUSLY ADDICTIVE

football management simulation *Championship Manager 4* has ensnared a record amount of users into its sickening net of despair. The footy game smashed the record for UK PC sales, shifting some 124,627 copies in its first week of release. Mathematicians have calculated that this more than doubles the previous record, set by *Championship Manager: Season 01/02*.

The disturbingly high sales have also propelled *CM4* into the top three of Chart-Track's All-Formats fastest-seller list, topped only by PlayStation 2 family favourites, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* and *The Getaway*. Managing director of *CM4* developer Sports Interactive, Miles 'Rent-a-Quote' Jacobson, bleated: "It's been clear for some time now that we were going to have a hit on our hands, but for our game to gatecrash the upper echelons of the Sony-dominated all-formats chart is an almost unbelievable achievement. I'd like to thank all of the people in the game's massively-supportive fan base for their help and encouragement and every single member of the development team, who are now finally seeing some real payback for all of the long nights and extra effort that they've had to put in over the past few months." However, the buoyant mood was soon tempered when it was revealed that *ZONE* contributor Keith Pullin was tragically unable to get his copy to work.

Self-appointed *Doom* legend Jon Romero has sadly been discovered working on a mobile-phone game. The man who allegedly pioneered the FPS genre before sullying his reputation with the abysmal *Daikatana* is now eking out a living in the realm of rudimentary distractions played almost exclusively on public transport. THQ Wireless confirmed that Monkeystone Games – set up by Romero with former id and Ion Storm stalwart Tom Hall – will be responsible for the Nokia N-Gage version of *Red Faction*. According to executive producer Stuart Platt: "The team at Monkeystone was the obvious choice. They created the FPS genre of gaming with such classics as *Quake* and *Doom*, and we are delighted that we can bring this expertise and experience to the Nokia N-Gage platform." Now labouring under the title of chief technical officer, Romero drooled: "I am thrilled to be working on a 3D shooter for one of the biggest publishers in wireless gaming. It's a real challenge to create a fast 3D game on such cutting-edge hardware, and I am loving every minute of it." Of course you are, Jon.

**"The alleged pioneer of the FPS is now eking out a living in the realm of rudimentary distractions"**



# CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-stop guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

ChartTrack

TOP 10



No surprises as *Champ Man 4* goes straight to the top of the league. Sports Interactive's incredibly addictive football sim has become the third-fastest selling game in the UK, and features a re-vamped player interface and updated stats.



*Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* has made a very good landing at number two, despite receiving a lukewarm review last issue. *Black Hawk Down* looks OK, but plays way too arcadey, has poor level design and thick-as-pigshit enemy AI.

	TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1 NEW	<b>CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4</b>	EIDOS	90%
2 NEW	DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN	NOVALOGIC	52%
3 ▼	COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS	EA	86%
4 NEW	RAINBOW SIX 3: RAVEN SHIELD	UBI SOFT	84%
5 ▼	THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION	EA	N/A
6 ▼	THE SIMS: UNLEASHED	EA	78%
7 ▼	SPLINTER CELL	UBI SOFT	94%
8 NEW	TOCA RACE DRIVER	CODEMASTERS	76%
9 NEW	INDIANA JONES & T.E.T	ACTIVISION	64%
10 ▼	SIM CITY 4	EA	80%



Those naughty terrorists are going to get a nasty surprise, with *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield* selling well at number four. *Raven Shield* leaves little room for gamers who lack patience, but its tense atmosphere and tactical elements should appeal to many.



Codemasters' solid *TOCA Race Driver* makes a respectable entry into the charts at number eight this month. The new storyline is backed up by a solid driving game with a huge number of tracks and cars, as well as a superb damage model.

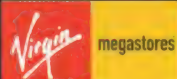
## YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)

Not a surprise to see *CM4* is doing so well. Still, it is the best of the series so far and deserves to do well. In fact, I'm enjoying it as much I did *CM2*, which I couldn't say for *CM3*. No sign of shifting *The Sims*, though.  
**tmulford**

All these months, and the game that goes straight into numero uno is the most BORING game from the most boring genre. The only decent thing about it is David Beckham.  
**jason6780**

Who on earth are all these people buying *The Sims*? The whole *Sims* phenomenon has become a bit like masturbation - we know full-well that everyone is at it, but no-one likes to admit it.  
**WildPods**



TOP 10

1	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4	EIDOS
2	RAINBOW SIX 3: RAVEN SHIELD	UBI SOFT
3	SPLINTER CELL	UBI SOFT
4	COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS	EA
5	PRAETORIANS	EIDOS
6	UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING	INFOGRAMES
7	DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN	NOVALOGIC
8	SIM CITY 4	EA
9	THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION	EA
10	WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES	EMPIRE

COMPETITION



## Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, *PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter is answer the following:

**QUESTION:** In which country is *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* set?

**Answers on a postcard to:** *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ06A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: May 29, 2003

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*.

**Terms and conditions:** Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.



# INCOMING!

PC ZONE'S RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. ALL APPROXIMATE MONTHLY DATES ARE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

## MAY

BLOODRAYNE	VU GAMES
CHASER	JOWOOD
DAY OF DEFEAT	ACTIVISION
DRAGON'S LAIR 3D	UBI SOFT
ENTER THE MATRIX	INFOGRAMES
F1 CHALLENGE '99 - '02	EA
GHOST MASTER	EMPIRE
GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY	ROCKSTAR
HARBINGER	DREAMCATCHER
MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR - VIKING INVASION	ACTIVISION
MOTO GP 2	THQ
NEXT GENERATION TENNIS 2003	WANADOO
NINA: AGENT CHRONICLES	CITY INTERACTIVE
PRO BEACH SOCCER	WANADOO
RED FACTION II	THQ
REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION	EIDOS
RISE OF NATIONS	MICROSOFT
THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR	EA
WWII: FRONTLINE COMMAND	KOCH MEDIA
X-MEN: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE	ACTIVISION

## JUNE

CYCLING MANAGER 3	GMX MEDIA
INDYCAR SERIES	CODEMASTERS
ISS 3	KONAMI
LOTUS CHALLENGE	XICAT
MEDAL OF HONOR: AA - NEW EXPANSION	EA
MIDNIGHT CLUB II	ROCKSTAR
STARSKY & HUTCH	EMPIRE
STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE II	ACTIVISION
THE HULK	VU GAMES
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2003	CODEMASTERS
WORLD RACING	TDK

## JULY

CAPTAIN SCARLET AND THE MYSTERONS	DIGITAL WORKSHOP
CHARM OF WAR	OXYGEN
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3	CODEMASTERS
COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN	EIDOS
COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO	VU GAMES
FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004	MICROSOFT
WARCRAFT III: THE FROZEN THRONE	VU GAMES

## AUGUST

BREED	CDV
HOMEWORLD 2	VU GAMES
SACRED	ASCARON
THE GREAT ESCAPE	SCI
TRON 2.0	DISNEY

## SEPTEMBER

APOCALYPTICA	KONAMI
CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II	SCI
CRUSADERS - BATTLE FOR OUTREMER	WANADOO
DUALITY	PHANTAGRAM
FAR CRY	UBI SOFT
FIRE WARRIOR	THQ
HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES
PSYCHOTOXIC	CDV
SÖLDNER - SECRET WARS	JOWOOD
THE SIMS ONLINE	EA
VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG	EMPIRE
WILL ROCK	UBI SOFT
XIII	UBI SOFT

## OCTOBER

BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WWII	EA
BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON	THQ
EVERQUEST II	SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY	ACTIVISION
POP IDOL	CODEMASTERS
SACRED	ASCARON

## NOVEMBER

EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD	ACTIVISION
GROUND CONTROL 2: OPERATION EXODUS	VU GAMES
JUDGE DREDD VS JUDGE DEATH	VU GAMES
PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME	UBI SOFT
TEMPLAR	TDK
WORMS 3	ACTIVISION

## TBA

BLACK & WHITE II	EA
DUKE NUKEM FOREVER	ROCKSTAR
ENCLAVE	STARBREEZE
MADE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER	EA
MAX PAYNE 2	ROCKSTAR
QUAKE IV	ACTIVISION
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION
TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS	EIDOS
X2: THE THREAT	EGOSOFT

# MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...

## TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS



**NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME** (actually it's the fourth) Lara Croft's grip on the release schedule has slipped, plunging her onto the spikes of uncertainty. All we know is the latest Tomb Raider is "coming soon" - try choosing your own release date by pushing a pin into a calendar on any day between now and Xmas.

- Publisher: Eidos
- Developer: Core Design
- ETA: TBA
- Website: [www.tombraider.com](http://www.tombraider.com)

## MIDNIGHT CLUB II

**ROCKSTAR'S ILLEGAL** street racer *Midnight Club II* has skidded off the release schedules into the summer. Set in Los Angeles, Paris and Tokyo, *Midnight Club II* has you racing souped-up cars around open-plan cities avoiding pedestrians.



- Publisher: Rockstar
- Developer: Rockstar
- ETA: Summer
- Website: [www.rockstargames.com](http://www.rockstargames.com)

## SÖLDNER: SECRET WARS



**ORIGINALLY PLANNED** for a spring release, this team-based tactical FPS has now slipped to September. With more than 50 weapons which can destroy whole buildings and foliage due to the game's Advanced Destruction System, it should be fun.

- Publisher: JoWood
- Developer: Wings Simulations
- ETA: September
- Website: [www.secretwars.net](http://www.secretwars.net)



## US TOP 10

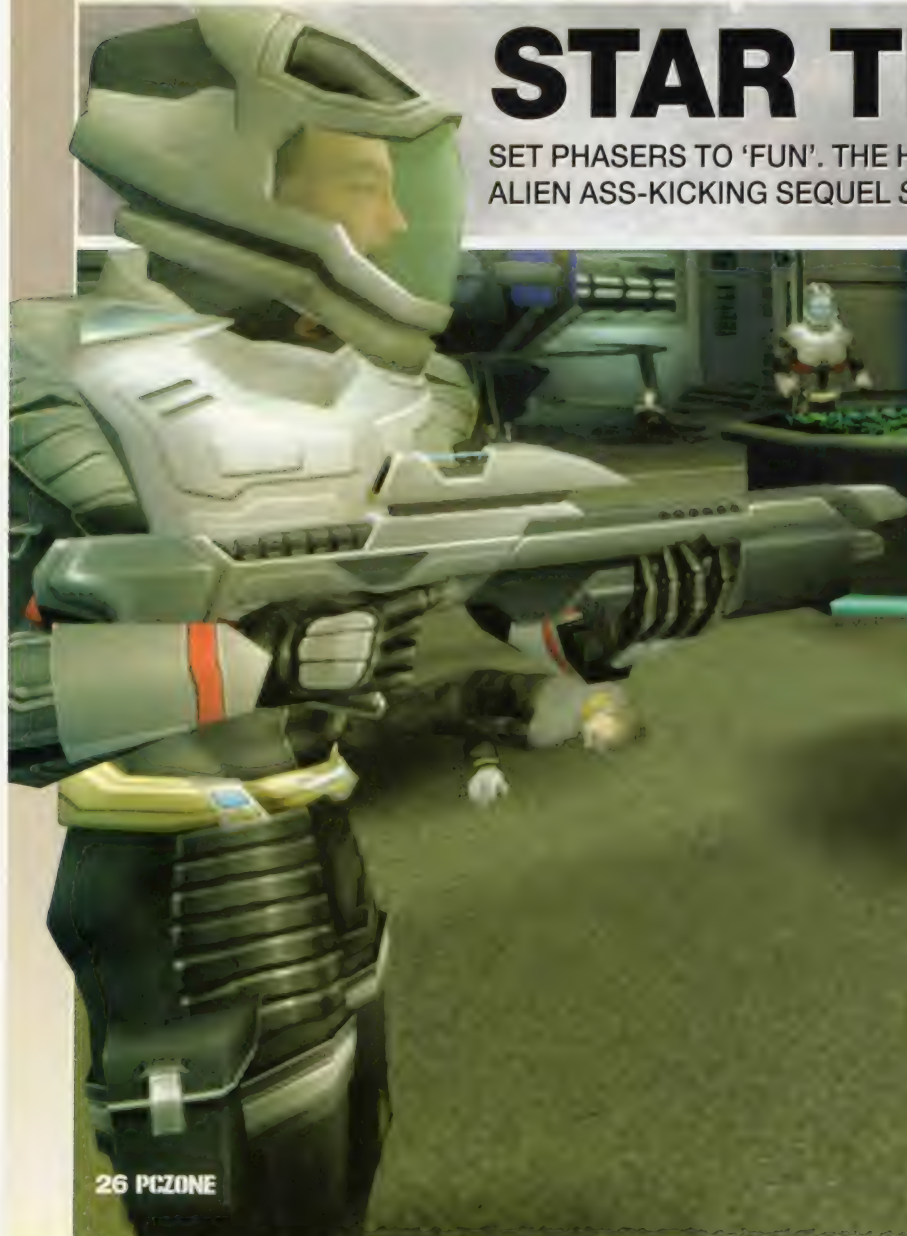
1	COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS	EA
2	THE SIMS: DELUXE EDITION	EA
3	SPLINTER CELL	UBI SOFT
4	BATTLEFIELD 1942	EA
5	SIM CITY 4	EA
6	THE SIMS: UNLEASHED	EA
7	ZOO TYCOON	MICROSOFT
8	FREELANCER	MICROSOFT
9	BATTLEFIELD 1942: THE ROAD TO ROME	EA
10	MASTER OF ORION III	INFOGRAMES





# STAR TREK: ELITE

SET PHASERS TO 'FUN'. THE HAZARD TEAM RETURNS IN THE ALIEN ASS-KICKING SEQUEL *STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE II*



**DETAILS ON *STAR TREK*** *Voyager*-themed shooter *Elite Force II* have been scarcer than sex scenes in *Deep Space Nine* since its announcement in April last year. But the Romulan cloaking device around the game momentarily lifted recently, allowing us a rare glance at its nether regions.

Beginning just as the *Voyager* TV series ends, the game sees you and your Hazard Team assigned to USS Enterprise under none other than monsieur Picard, before embarking on an 11-environment quest sparked by a distress signal from Federation starship Dallas. Along the way, you'll fight against or alongside almost every sentient life-form the galaxy has to offer, including Klingons, Romulans, Ferengi and a vicious race of many-clawed exomorphs. More than a dozen weapons – each with alternate fire and, unlike the first game, fully animated – are at hand, from standard Federation-issue hand phasers and compression rifles, to more exotic alien-designed electricity dischargers and radiation guns.

Compared to the first game, *Elite Force II* is on a far bigger scale, with missions unfolding not only onboard vessels and space stations, but on planetary surfaces and even in the zero-G environment of space itself. And while cut-scenes maintain a tight, cinematic grip on the plot, Ritual promises plenty of different routes to reach your mission goals.

Despite acting as part of a team, you'll have no control over other characters, as *EFII*'s emphasis is on ferocious and frantic firefights, both in single and multiplayer. Talking of which, bots, mutators, and a mass of team-based and solo game types should mean that for once, in space plenty of people will hear you scream.

■ **Publisher:** Activision  
■ **Developer:** Ritual  
■ **ETA:** June  
■ **Website:** [www.ritual.com/ef2/](http://www.ritual.com/ef2/)





**FORCE II**









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**XBOX  
LIVE**

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# JUST. ONE. MORE. GO.

**Can computer game-playing get out of hand? Can it destroy not just your personal hygiene but your friendships, your marriage, your career – even your life? David McCandless talks to the real games junkies**

**"JUST ONE** more go." We've all said it. Then, suddenly, it's four in the morning – 4am? No way! Shit. Could've sworn it was only 12. The birds are singing outside and your mouse hand is locked into a lobster-like claw. Girlfriend long since crashed out. Mouth leathery, eyes burning, sick with self-disgust, you quit out of whatever game you're playing and hit the sack. But sleep brings no relief. Dreams of running down endless corridors fill your mind, wood elves with machine guns at your heels, SWAT teams in leather hosiery blowing things up, mech-strewn versions of ex-girlfriends bearing down on you out of the mist (you may not have had that one).

Once in a while, we all play that bit too long, too hard. But those pesky great games involve you so completely that you just can't stop. A great game gets you hooked. That's one of the great gaming truths. Ever since the dawn of computing, when game reviews handed out quaint pseudo-scientific ratings (8/10 for playability! 6/10 for graphics!), addictiveness has been the essential quality of a classic.

## WEB DEPENDENCE

Until recently though there's been a natural safety catch to this addictiveness. Even the most addictive single-player game, once mastered or finished, becomes repetitive and boring. You dump it and move on. But now, with the rise of sophisticated online gaming, the reverse is true. The more you play them, the better they get.

With thousands of other human players packing the online fantasy universes of today, endless variety and social interaction is guaranteed every time you

log in. Unlimited quests and lush visuals provide excitement and involvement. 24/7 Net culture and broadband fat pipes ensure action is continuous and effortlessly accessible from the comfort of your swing chair. They are endlessly entertaining and some people are finding they literally cannot stop playing...

## CASE 1: EVERCRACK

Ron Jaffe had ballooned in weight to 19 stone, his marriage was on the rocks, and he was losing work and clients. But he was a level 53 Halfling druid, one of the leaders of the White Wolf Clan, and possessor of damn fine magic items. And that was all that mattered.

"EverQuest was a daily and nightly routine for me. I played it mornings, afternoons and evenings," says the 32-year-old computer consultant. "All around me my life was crumbling. My wife and I were spending little quality time together. She even said that I was speaking in my sleep about orcs and other EQ monsters and situations. But that was OK, because in the world of Norrath, I was well loved, a hero, and I was able to bury my real life woes while I played."

Jaffe is not a rarity. As PC ZONE readers will be well aware of, the world's biggest online RPG has earned the nickname EverCrack. A few of its 400,000 subscribers have even made international headlines. In the US last year, a 21-year-old man with a dedicated 12-hour a day EQ









habit and a history of mental illness committed suicide minutes after a session. His mother blamed his death on the game. In 2001, a nine-month-old baby boy died in Florida after being left in a cupboard by his father for more than 24 hours so he could play *EverQuest* undisturbed. He got 15 years.

#### WHACKING UP

Obviously not every elf-fancier is an EverCrackwhore, but many may suffer the insidious, creeping addiction suffered by professionals like Jaffe, whose "compulsive desire" for the game gradually built up over weeks and months. "After about a year I started to realise that I had a problem," he says. "About this time my father passed away, and the lure of *EQ* as a place to escape grew even stronger." Jaffe became wrapped up in the status he had in the game as a guild leader. To maintain this position, he even started spending real money on in-game items.

"I ran across this ad on eBay which offered a wide range of items and platinum pieces, 1,000 for US\$150" he recalls. "High-level characters were going from US\$3,000 to as much as US\$5,000. I ordered 2,000 plat pieces as well as a couple of other items. In the end I spent a grand total of US\$1,000."

"They're meant to have stopped this now," he adds. "But there are still a few sophisticated rackets going on."

Luckily, Jaffe found refuge and salvation in Online Gamers Anonymous ([www.oganon.org](http://www.oganon.org)), a website that he now helps to run. Along with Yahoo's *EverQuest* Widows and Mothers Against Videogame Addiction And Violence ([www.mavav.org](http://www.mavav.org)) it's one of several online self-help groups that have sprung up to deal with the fallout from games such as *EverQuest*, which they dub 'heroinware'.

OLGAnon's forums are swollen with stories of dark gaming habits, lives ruined, friends lost, marriages broken, and the dark spectre of man-breasts.

#### EASY PICKINGS

The addiction of one forum poster 'Tommy', for example, got so compulsive he couldn't even leave his computer to go to the toilet. "I decided to set up a little pot in my computer room so I wouldn't have to get up when I needed to go pee." When he was finally fired for pulling one sickie too many his life quickly spiralled out of control. His family fell on benefits. His wife left him, taking their two daughters with her. He quickly re-married. "Virtually," that is, this time to a girl he met in the game. Unfortunately this whirlwind romance

ended in divorce when she placed him on her/ignore list. He went back to his wife on his knees but she had met someone else and moved on. Finally, he lost custody of his kids and was ordered by a judge to seek professional help. He ended up at OLGAnon.

"Love is the power which changes your life," reads the site's slogan. A desperate visitor like Tommy can loosen the grip gaming has on their lives by using a 12-step program modelled on the famous Alcoholic Anonymous system.

Those seeking help are encouraged to admit that their lives have become unmanageable thanks to online gaming and by step three will: "make a decision to turn their will and their lives over to the care of God as we understand Him."

## THINK OF THE CHILDREN!

### THE CURSE OF THE FAT PIPES...

When most of us were growing up we didn't have 512K fat pipes and *Unreal Tournament 2003* to tempt us away from our studies. Today's kids live in a technological valley of temptation and are particularly vulnerable to online gaming addiction, so says clinical psychologist Dr Tim Miller.

"It's a huge and growing problem," he says. "I've seen a number of cases with 17- or 18-year-old males where they have a broadband (Internet) connection and they basically haven't left the house for years."

In Japan this disorder is well noted. It's called hikikomori or "withdrawal from society". It is especially prevalent among teenage boys some of whom never leave their rooms, often for years at a time, and it's on the rise. It has been linked, in part, to videogames abuse.

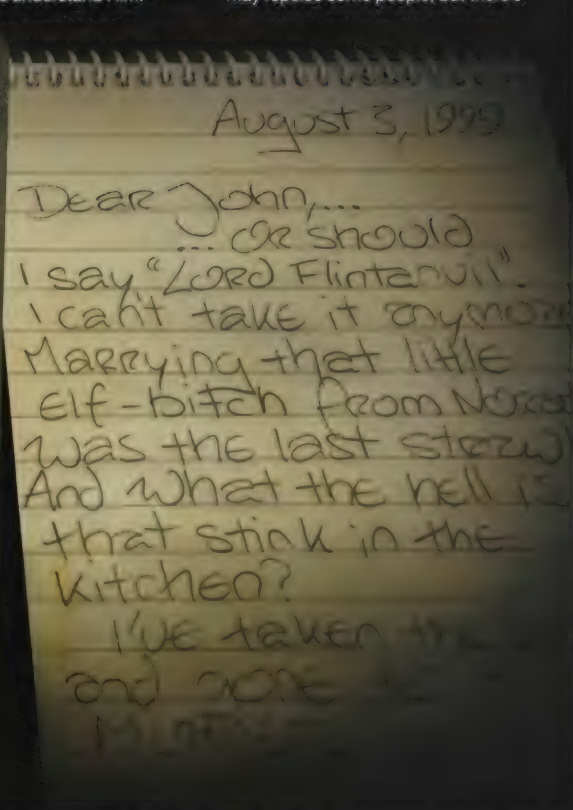
Often these kids are desperate for help.

"I have to go back to school next year to repeat the same three courses I botched up because of my addiction," confessed one American school kid on a bulletin board. "Not even my parents know about it."

Another is rather more eloquent: "MY LIFE IS RUINED, IT'S NOW LIKE A FRIGGING NUCLEAR WASTELAND WHICH I HAVE TO REBUILD TO ITS ORIGINAL GARDIN OF EDIN BEAUTY [sic]! THIS WILL TAKE A LONGGGGG TIME AND THE PROCESS WILL BE HELL ON EARTH!"

Ah, there's the catch. And there you were thinking it was a purely altruistic organisation...

Such an open spiritual solution may repulse some people, but there's



August 3, 1999

Dear John,  
... or should I say "Lord Flintanvil". I can't take it anymore. Marrying that little elf-bitch from Norad was the last straw! And what the hell is that stick in the kitchen? I've taken the and none...



no doubt that it has rescued people like Jaffe from a very bad situation. As he himself evangelises:

"Deleting my characters was invigorating! I was in control. With each deletion, I reclaimed my pride and self esteem. I felt in control of my life and my destiny."

After two and a half years of solid *EQ* addiction, he was able to turn his back on Norrath for good.

## CASE TWO: TO BE NUMBER ONE

Ahmar Ahmad is a 30-something web designer who lives with his parents in Beckenham, South London. A year ago he came across an obscure online game called *CastleQuest* in some far-flung corner of the web. His life has not been the same since.

*CastleQuest* is stats-based, text-only, fantasy war game that runs in a browser. Players accumulate resources, build



## IS IT A DRUG?

- (a) Is the substance often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended?**
- (b) Is there a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use?**
- (c) Are important social, occupational, or recreational activities given up or reduced because of substance use?**

[FROM THE DSM-IV CRITERIA FOR SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCE]

Can PC games be like drugs for some people? Is there something about them that hooks the brain, like nicotine or heroin? Some researchers looking at the effects of computer gaming think so. They call it stimulus addiction. Repeated stimulation trains the brain to react rather than reason. This applies especially to shooters like *Counter-Strike*, which present relentless, fast moving, super-violent situations which require ultra-fast reactions, then short periods of 'calm', followed by more tension. These ping-ponging highs and lows mimic the reinforcing effect of cocaine and crack in the brain.

This videogame addiction is just a symptom of the wider malaise of "Internet Addiction Disorder" says Dr Maressa Hecht Orzack, a Harvard University psychologist and specialist in this field. "It's an emerging disorder," she says, "suffered by people who find the virtual reality on computer screens more attractive than everyday reality." She singles out online chat and videogames as the most compelling activities.

The chief symptoms are a drug-like "sense of well-being and euphoria" while at the computer and craving when not. Sufferers also experience "physical come-downs" which can include carpal tunnel syndrome (inflammation of the wrist), migraines, backaches and sleep disturbances.

In extreme cases, it can push people into amazing feats of physical endurance, which can have serious consequences for health. The recent *Counter-Strike* deaths in Korea are the most terrible example. One 24-year-old South Korean collapsed and died after an 86 hour *Counter-Strike* marathon. Ten days later, another man, 27-year-old Lien Wen-Chung went to the toilet after a 32 session and didn't come back. He was found nose bleeding, foaming at the mouth, and died on his way to the hospital.

"That doesn't surprise me", says our *Counter-Strike* addict, Steve. "At some LAN parties, there are people crashed out on the floor, not making any sense. People just step over them."

Dr Orzack sees computer addiction as more like eating disorders and compulsive shopping than substance abuse. And her recommended treatment? Addicts "must learn how to normalise their computer use just as those individuals with Eating Disorders need to learn to eat in order to survive." You read it here first.

Check out [www.computeraddiction.com](http://www.computeraddiction.com) for more information.

kingdoms, hatch monsters, and then form alliances and attack each other in a constant struggle for dominance. So far so *WarCraft*.

"Lots of players are referring to it as a drug," says Ahmad. "Whenever the game goes offline, everyone is crying. People are screaming for someone to bring it back."

This lo-fi game inspires such obsession in its players thanks to a single, devious design twist. The game is set in a persistent universe. "Each player has a power balance which reduces by two points every hour," Afshar explains. "Don't play for two days and by the time you come back there'll be nothing left of your character."

So, the longer you play the game, the more powerful your character becomes. Unable to stay awake for 24 hours no matter how hard he tried, Afshar hatched a cunning scheme to reach the top of the leader board. He enlisted the aid of his brother, Amir. Together, they played the game in shifts.

"We basically ran the character 24 hours," Afshar chuckles as he recounts the surreal depths of his addiction. "Ahmad would do the night shift. I'd do the day shift. He'd go to sleep. I'd stay awake. No one could catch our character."

Today Ahmad (aka Yama Bramble) is number one in a system of 2,500 players. 20 other players serve as henchmen in his personal army. He is hated, feared and admired in pretty much equal measures.

"They all kind of worship me," he chuckles. "I've got this kind of God status within the system. Everyone comes to me with their problems, it's bizarre. A lot of them are stupidly young so they haven't really got a clue - it's good to sort of guide them."

"Mind you," he adds. "There's a lot of people who hate me for it. The most popular target in the game is me."

The soft-spoken Ahmad admits with a self-effacing chuckle that he doesn't go out "as much as he should". Recently his brother got a full-time job and is now less keen to be his lieutenant. So to keep his character on top, Afshar must go it alone, 12 to 16 hours a day.

"I wake up between 10 and 12am and log myself in straight away. Then I stay awake playing until 5am. I may be downstairs making some food, having a coffee but I'm online pretty much the whole period. I'm slowly hoping that I'll get bored of it, I think the highest level you can get is 58. Once I hit that I'll probably stop. Probably..."

## CASE THREE: LIES, DAMN LIES

After four 'lost' years playing *Counter-Strike*, Steve Dobbs (not his real name), a 29-year-old office manager from London, is ready to admit he's an addict.

"I suppose it only really became a problem when I had broadband installed at home. I already played *Counter-Strike* every day at work, lunch times, and evenings. My work colleagues thought it was bit weird that everyday at 1pm on the dot I would fire it up while they went to the pub or to get sandwiches. I would often stay after work, sometimes until midnight. I would lie to my girlfriend, saying I was working late, when in fact I was playing."

After a while, Steve began to notice the game having a physical effect on him. "When I got home, I would be kind of 'frozen'. I would walk around scanning the rooftops for snipers or imagining people were going to leap out from behind walls. It sounds funny but it was pretty weird. It was a very intense state like being on a drug. It took me ages to unwind."

"Then when I got ADSL at home, I kept sneaking in games, rewarding myself for getting any job done. My mood became wrapped up in the game. If I had a succession of bad rounds, getting killed



too early, I would get so wound up and angry. I even smashed a few things, a few mugs, a chair once. But then if I was on a good streak, I would be happy. The compliments of the other players would make me feel especially good."

### GO, GO, GO!

Like drug addicts, many game addicts do the guilt-and-purge thing. Their use finally reaches a crescendo that even they can't bare. They stop abruptly, vowing never to play again. They destroy their online characters, de-install the game, and, unable to throw the game out, often surrender the disks to their partner to stop them playing it.

"I gave my girlfriend the CD and told her to hide it. But then two days later, I was on my knees, begging her to give it back to me. I went through every trick in the book, threatening, pleading, like a child, to convince her to give me the disk back. I mean... what the f---k was I doing?"

After minor battles with quitting smoking, both cigarettes (20 a day) and cannabis (a couple of spliffs every evening), Steve compares his compulsive game playing to drug abuse.

"When I've got hooked into a game it can have the qualities of a drug. You get really into it. The outside world fades. You get pleasure from it. You can't stop playing it."

Now Steve is on the wagon and has not played online games for more than six months. "I play very occasionally now as a treat to myself. I enjoy it more, even

though I'm completely out of practise and get mutilated on all my old servers. That's the price I suppose."

### GAMES MAY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

So, is videogame addiction an unseen creeping suburban disease that destroys marriages, bank balances, careers, and even lives? Is there a hidden stratum of people – IT professionals, bankers, lawyers, homemakers – who are hopelessly hooked on games like the never-ending *EverQuest*?

The game developers are staying well out of the debate. "I guess our standpoint is the same as all kinds of products – you have to be responsible in using it," said Scott McDaniel, vice president of marketing for Sony Online Entertainment (creators of *EverQuest*), in a recent interview. "You don't see disclaimers when you get in a car saying 'Don't run over people.' People have to exhibit their own good sense, and if they have kids, they need to pay attention to what they're doing."

Obviously this statement doesn't address the key concern at all, and seems like a bit of a cop-out when games like *EQ* are quite clearly damaging people's lives, albeit a very small number of people. Former *EQ* addict Ron Jaffe has a different take: people who are lacking something in their lives may turn to games to fill the void. "These are the individuals who I believe are most vulnerable to becoming compulsive game players," he says. If your social life is poor, he reasons,

## THE PC ZONE QUIZ: ARE YOU ADDICTED?

REMEMBER: ADDICTION IS NOT A STATE, IT'S A CONTINUUM. THERE ARE DEGREES OF IT. FROM IDLE REGULAR USE, THROUGH TO COMPULSION, DEPENDENCY, AND THEN TO SELLING YOUR GRANDMA AT CASH CONVERTERS. TRY OUR FUN QUIZ TO FIND OUT HOW ADDICTED YOU REALLY ARE

- ☐ Do you ever find yourself playing for longer than you wanted to?
- ☐ Do you often play in long continuous sessions, more than three hours?
- ☐ Do you play every day?
- ☐ Including weekends and holidays?
- ☐ Do you have important work or stuff to sort out, but ignore it to have "just one more go"?
- ☐ Do you consider pizza and Jolt Cola to be a normal, healthy diet?
- ☐ Do you feel the urge to 'reward yourself' with a bout of gaming?
- ☐ Do you become restless or irritable if you can't play?
- ☐ Did you use to do sport at school, but now throw like a girl?
- ☐ Ever tried to cut back on playing?
- ☐ And failed?
- ☐ Ever been given an ultimatum by a partner or parents?
- ☐ And ignored it?
- ☐ Ever lied about the amount you play to employers, friends or family?
- ☐ Have you ever dreamt of videogames?
- ☐ Has gaming ever caused problems with your school or your job?
- ☐ Do you get angry if you lose while playing (sometimes to the point where you actually want to KILL your opponent)?
- ☐ Do you think about this defeat for hours or even days after?
- ☐ Have you ever used the words 'ownage', 'gibs' or 'lamerz' in conversation?
- ☐ Do all your friends have names like Hot69 and Darth Derek?
- ☐ When someone tells you a joke, do you say 'LOL' instead of laughing?

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- 0-4 Relax, you're in control. Games are just one part of your healthy, normal lifestyle, and you could safely go abroad without worrying about losing your status online.
- 5-10 You are starting to show some signs of addiction. You love games and you sometimes let them impinge on your relationships and work, even when you don't want them to.
- 11-15 You are a borderline games junkie. You have trouble saying no to games and are on a slippery slope to full dependency. Your only way out is games journalism.
- 16-21 You are an addict. You can't live without games, and your virtual persona is a lot more interesting than you are. You have a very short life expectancy. Seek help.

you may be drawn to the community aspect of online gaming. If you don't feel important, you can become dependent on your status within the game.

*Counter-Strike* player Steve disagrees. "We live in a culture of addiction," he says. "Everyone's addicted to something. If it's not videogames, maybe it's TV, or food, or cigarettes, or chocolate, or shopping."

So, should *Counter-Strike*, like a pack of smokes, come with a health warning? Should online RPGs restrict the login time of their users to healthy time-spans, or games that demand that you play them obsessively be banned? The answer to all

these questions is probably no, but it's clear that games can be dangerously addictive, and as they become more sophisticated and more multiplayer oriented, they're only going to become more so. *PC ZONE*'s only advice is: take a break, you sick, obsessive freaks.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What do you think? Is videogame addiction a real phenomenon or is it just a case of 'too much of a good thing'? Do you think you are addicted? Do you have a story to tell? Get on the forum at [www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk) and let it all out. [X]



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ACTUAL PC SCREENSHOT





A promotional image for the video game Grand Theft Auto: Vice City. The background is a tropical street scene at dusk or dawn, with palm trees and a street lamp. Two characters are running on the street: one on the left, shirtless and wearing brown pants, and one on the right, wearing a yellow shirt and blue jeans. A car wheel is visible in the bottom left corner. The title 'Grand Theft Auto' is in large, bold, white letters with a black outline, and 'Vice City' is in a pink, stylized script font with a black outline.

# Grand Theft Auto *Vice City*

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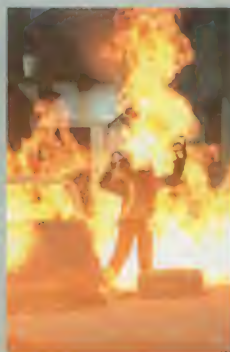




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**1998** *Half-Life* takes the world by storm, and holds the title of best FPS ever for more than three years.

**2003** Valve announces *Half-Life 2*.



## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Valve  
**PUBLISHER** VU Games  
**WEBSITE** [www.valvesoftware.com](http://www.valvesoftware.com)  
**ETA** September 30 2003

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- You need to ask? Oh, OK...
- Life-like characters
- Stunning physic and graphic engines
- Utterly immersive and beautifully cinematic
- Incredible AI
- 50 terrifying enemies
- Look, just read the preview will you?

**THIS IS IT.** This is the day you've been waiting for. For four and a half years you've wondered, you've speculated, you've guessed. You've talked about its existence endlessly with friends, family, strangers, your pet dog and even Rodney, your hamster. But today, all that will come to an end. Because today is the day you find out all about the game which every gamer has wanted to hear about more than any other PC title in history. No more speculation. No more hoping. It's time for your questions to be answered.

I was lucky enough to spend a day at Valve's HQ in Seattle, where director of marketing Doug Lombardi and Valve's managing director Gabe Newell took me through just about every element of a game that simply belies belief, that realises the dreams of every gaming vision you've dreamt about. So join me now as I recount what I saw and try to share with you my excitement at the sheer beauty, innovation and magnitude of a game that is about to reinvent the way we look at games forever.

## SO IT BEGINS

"Once again, you play as Gordon Freeman," began Doug Lombardi as I sat in silence, soaking up his every word like a crusty sponge. "A certain amount of time has passed since *Half-Life*, and you've moved well beyond Black Mesa. However, the alien threat has now spread to various reaches of the world, and a great deal of it takes place in a fictional city called City 17 in north central Europe, although you won't be restricted just to this area." He was being purposefully cagey, clearly not wanting to reveal too much about the plot too soon. "The alien invasion is on a far grander scale this time around. In *Half-Life* they were just sending in the scouts, so to speak. This time, they're bringing in the big guns."

At this point, a tired looking Gabe cut in. "When the game starts, you'll be a little confused about what's going on, but you'll soon start to find out. There's going to be a set of NPCs that are going to be really important to you, some of those will be people you already know from Black Mesa, while others you won't have met before." And what about the sinister suited man, known as the G-Man? "Don't worry, you'll find out much more about what the G-Man is up to and what his plans are for you."

My head was filled with questions, hankering to be satisfied after so many years of unsubstantiated rumours and personal speculation. I didn't know what to ask first. How about the length of time *HL2* had been in development? Six months? A year? "We actually started work on *Half-Life 2* right after we shipped the first game (1998). We've been really very quiet on purpose, as we found ourselves with an interesting opportunity. Given the sales and critical reception of the product, and the online and mod community that's developed around it, we had a rare opportunity with *Half-Life 2*, a chance to shoot for the moon so to speak, and we've already spent twice as much time on *HL2* than we did on *Half-Life*, with a much larger team, and much more understanding about going about creating an FPS." Gabe's features, lined with sleep deprivation (he and his team are currently working round the clock on the project) couldn't hide his excitement and passion for the game. It was hard to believe that Valve had managed to keep the biggest game of all time a secret for so long. His next comment stunned me. "So we're in the unusual situation of announcing the product at E3 this year and then shipping it on September 30." That's September 2003 right? "That's right." No, that's incredible.

**"We had a rare opportunity with *Half-Life 2*, a chance to shoot for the moon"**

**GABE NEWELL** MANAGING DIRECTOR, VALVE



## PREVIEWS

### BREATHLESS

I needed time to catch my breath, but Gabe was keen to push on, every minute precious with *Half-Life 2*'s shipping date just five months away. "We wanted *Half-Life 2* to be a much larger leap forward than *Half-Life* was. There's been no external funding, no external producer looking at a milestone list or telling us what to do. We've been able to isolate ourselves from those kinds of constraints and concentrate instead on building what we believe to be the right game."

But why leave it so long to tell the world? "A lot of games get announced and a year later, you're still waiting to see it. And we've certainly fallen into that trap in the past. Typically the product is announced before you have a clear idea of how you're going to resolve all the complicated issues of how to build everything and get it to work."

Clearly *Half-Life 2* is reaching completion, and is currently in a stage of extensive play testing. The deep-set rings under the eyes of Valve's talented team testify to that. With Gabe's introduction to *HL2*'s development background done, it was time for him to return to work, leaving me in the hugely capable hands of Doug. As he started loading up the game, I caught myself gripping my chair, knuckles drained of colour and sweat beads marking the leather covering of the arm rests. This was the moment I'd



### SCIENTIST MAKEOVER

#### YOU'RE LOOKING GOOD THERE DOC


Take a look at these two shots and you'll see first-hand just how much has changed since *Half-Life*. Formerly a generic, bug-eyed scientist with no real facial characteristics, Dr Eli Vance has now been transformed into a life-like character, with realistic looking skin, eyes and features. And if you think that's impressive, just wait till you see him animated. You'll be amazed.



Remember this guy? Well in *Half-Life 2* he's called Dr Eli Vance, and he's a very important character indeed.







the room, as it wobbled onto its side and began slowly rolling towards the edge of the screen with a satisfying grate. "Basically, we wanted to have this great environment where things look, feel and act as they should. One of the great things about *Half-Life* was that everything around you told you that you were in a world which felt real, and that you were immersed in it absolutely, rather than just being in a shooting gallery."

So how has Valve achieved this ambitious goal? "We want to have physics that just lend to that realistic feel. We don't want it to be an over the top display which shows how well we can do physics, but rather we wanted to make them organic, so they feel part of the gameplay world. We wanted to design a physics system which kept the mod makers in mind, so they can use our physics tools in a way that is convincing and fun for gameplay and designing, without burdening them with physics properties." (For more information on the mod capabilities of HL2, check out the A *Half-Life Beyond The Shelf* panel).

#### ORDER AND CHAOS

Suddenly something unexpected happened. The rolling barrel, which we'd both assumed had stopped, had somehow gained enough momentum to drop into a pit on the other side of the level. "Wow, I've dropped that barrel a thousand times and it's never done that before," exclaimed Doug, a wide grin spreading across his face. Chaos Theory in a game engine? Now that's quality.

Over the next ten minutes, Doug let me play with a series of objects, each of which reacted exactly as they would in the real world. Bottles clunked and bullet cases rang as they hit the floor, each material and object making a different sound depending on what it came into contact with, and from what height it was dropped. But it was the rag-doll physics of the dead bodies that were most impressive, spinning and bucking when thrown against walls, sliding convincingly off a ledge when placed precariously on the edge of one. Taking a shotgun, I blew a wooden box to pieces, and watched as it splintered into a heap of jagged-edged planks. Then, walking over the wood-chippings, Gordon's movement became hampered by the irregular surface as he battled to maintain balance. "Both you and the NPCs will be weighted, and have physics properties simulated. Jay Steloy, our lead programmer since 1996, has been working on this technology for the better part of four years." Clearly it's

Antlions are one of many fearsome new enemies that you'll be coming up against in *Half-Life 2*.

travelled 6,000 miles and waited my whole career to see. The screen went momentarily dark, and then slowly came to life. We were in...

#### THE LAWS OF PHYSICS

"The first thing I'm going to show you is the tech engine, which we're calling Source. We've decided not to come up with a big engine name. First off, I'll show you the physics," began Doug as he panned around the tech-level on

screen. Barrels, cans, bullet casings, bottles and dead bodies lay discarded on the ground, all boasting a level of detail I'd never seen in any game before. Although sparse, the environment was crisp and convincing, beautifully textured and shaded. With an object manipulation device (which won't feature in the game itself) he picked up a barrel and dropped it from a height. It slammed to earth, sending a hollow metallic crash resounding round

**"Barrels, cans, bullets, and dead bodies lay discarded, all boasting a level of detail I'd never seen before"**





## A WALL OF SILENCE

### HOW COULD THEY HAVE KEPT IT SO QUIET?

It must have been frustrating for everyone at Valve to not talk about *HL2* – the most anticipated game ever on the PC – for more than four years. “When you see people going crazy about someone else’s game, and we’re sitting on something like this, it drives you nuts,” explained Doug. But as Gabe rightly pointed out, it was better to wait till Valve could deliver on its promises. And it’s looking like it will, and then some. But what did Doug make of all the rumours about the game that have been circulating the Internet for several years? “It’s just comical when you see the random postings on forums saying, ‘I’ve heard about *Half-Life 2*, it’s going to be x, y and z’. The rumour that we were going to be launching *Half-Life 2* on Xbox first, was the one that really made me laugh.” And aren’t we all glad that there was no truth in that one?



Shhhhhhhhhhh!

been time well spent, and despite Doug’s understated comments, *Half-Life 2*’s physics system is without a doubt the most life-like I’ve ever seen.

### REAL CHARACTER

With the tech level done, it was time to see something even more impressive. No amount of staring at the screenshots on these pages and no matter how many superlative-laced statements I write here can come even close to doing this next part justice. Doug had loaded up a level, an office with a woman standing by a desk, who he introduced as Alyx. “Is that in game?” I asked, stuttering more violently than a scratched Gareth Gates record. “Yeah, this is all in game.” Incredible. For the first time ever, here was a game character that looked real. Not gaming real, but REAL real. The way

she stood, the subtle sway of her hips as she shifted her weight, the way her upper body rolled as she put her hands on her hips. Most extraordinary of all, though, was her face. Exuding a subtle beauty, her eyes strayed around the room, arching round to stare at us with a look of genuine disinterest.

Her face sported faded freckles and different depths of shading, furnishing her with a personality before she even spoke, something I was now incapable of doing. Fortunately, Doug still retained the power of speech. “Characters are probably one of the biggest investments we made in the game. In *Half-Life* we put in rudimentary characters as a test, to see how it would work if they actually spoke to you rather than you having to read a load of text. Something we hate more than anything is the idea of

You’ll be able to tell instantly by the way a character looks, whether they’re good or evil.

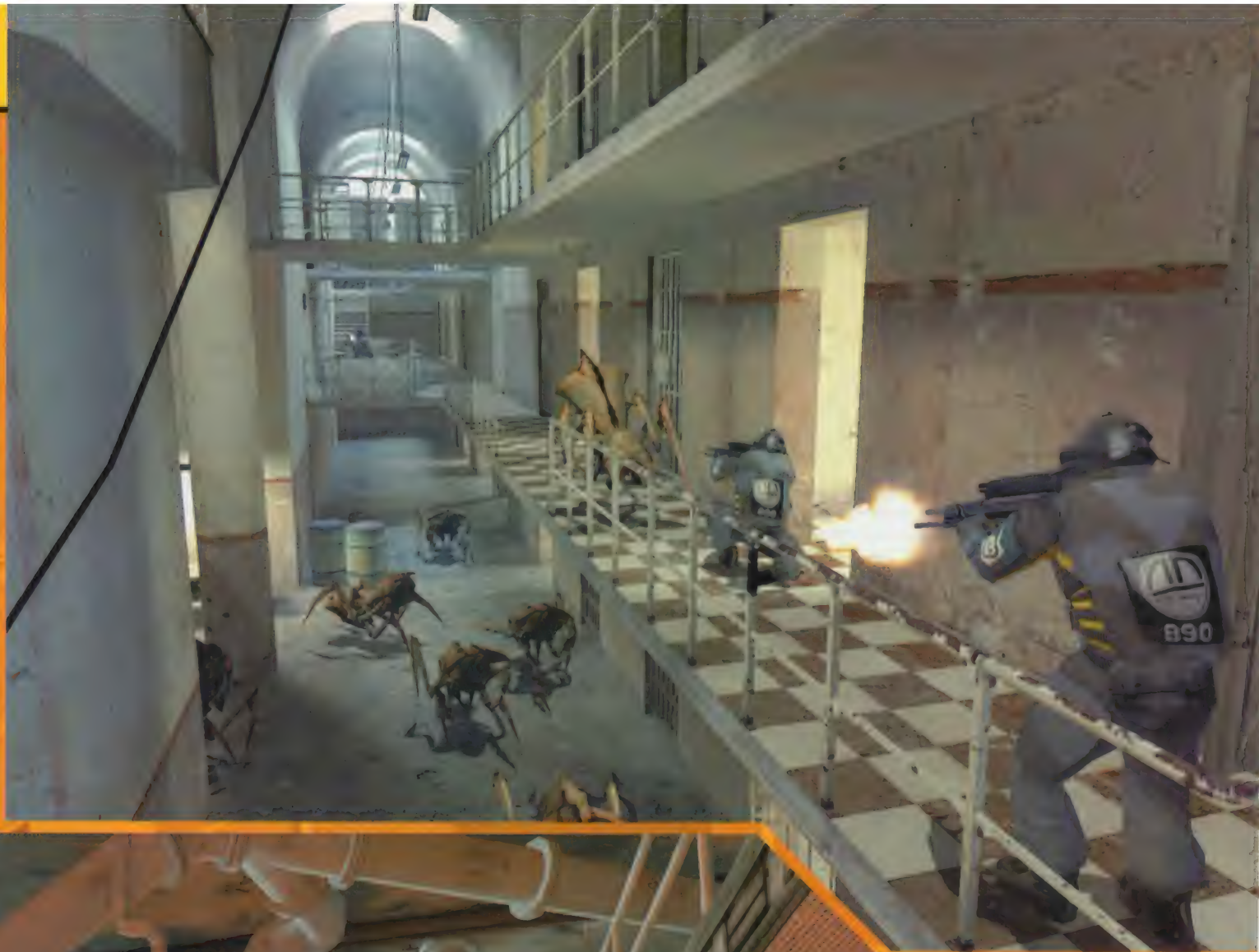
stopping the action to watch a movie. We tried to keep the story pretty simple in *Half-Life* and people loved it, but many said there weren’t enough of those characters. A lot of people said that the first time Barney or a scientist died, they felt bad, that they felt a personal connection with those characters. So we’ve taken pretty much all of the money that we made from the first game and invested it into this one, most of all, into the characters.” I urged Doug to continue with a near inaudible grunt.

### I’M ON YOUR SIDE

“Alyx is your ally. Story-wise, she is the bridge from *Half-Life*. There is an African-American scientist in *Half-Life* (who’s also in *HL2*) and she is his daughter. Ken Birdwell, one of the lead engineers on both games, decided that we were going to put shaders on each character’s skin, but not so that it’s ultra shiny and waxy like in most other games. After all, no-one’s skin is blemish







With no scripted sequences, you'll never know how the AI will react.

**"We've taken pretty much all of the money we made from the first game and invested it in this one"**

**DOUG LOMBARDI**  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, VALVE

free, is it? Another thing that we wanted to address was this feeling that when characters move, they always feel like they're just these pegged together hockey stick players. So we've built an entire musculature system, so that when, for example, Alyx puts her hands on her hips, there's a rolling between her breasts, shoulders and arms. These subtleties make her more realistic."

"The other thing Ken researched was how game characters look at you. And he realised that they always look like they're looking over your head or are cross-eyed. So he studied why that was and there were a couple of things he learnt. First off, eyes are not circular. In most games they're round. Also, people's field of views aren't straight. You always look slightly sideways, which





is why a lot of game characters look like they're cross-eyed. So we adjusted their eyes accordingly. Then we separated the layer of sheen that's over the eye and the layer for the actual pupil, to give it that depth and shininess of a real person's eyes." This was all getting too good to be true. How many times have we all dreamt of life-like characters in games, with believable movement, action and reaction, a sense that we are truly in another world, one so believable that you never doubt it's reality? *Half-Life 2* is that dream. But wait, there's more.

"We then wanted to make these characters able to deliver lines with emotion," continued Doug. You mean with proper facial expressions? "Exactly." With a press of a button, Alyx started cycling through her facial repertoire. Happy, sad, angry, coy, assertive. The list just went on. But did they all look convincing? You'd better believe it. "We wanted the characters to be emotive, so if they're angry or suspicious, or they want to give you a kind of 'Hey, look over there' gesture, they can communicate emotions just through their facial expressions."

#### DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

Once again, a great deal of time, money and research went into making this stunning system. "There's a guy called Dr Paul Ekman ([www.paulekman.com](http://www.paulekman.com)) who did a bunch of research on the mentally ill, to find out what it means to

look mentally ill. He came up with this whole language of facial expressions, incorporating the 40-odd facial expressions we all make, which can be mixed to create a sub-set of facial expressions. We basically took things from his research and made it applicable to *Half-Life 2*'s facial animation system. So we have these simple sets of facial animation fonts, and they can be applied to Alyx, to an alien or whoever we want."

Later on in the day, when I caught up with Gabe again, he expanded on the process Valve went through to achieve complete authenticity for their character's facial expressions. "There's a part in the brain which figures out where other people are looking. So we've tried to make the characters as real as possible so that when they react to you, your brain will tell you whether they like you or not, or whether they're looking at you or somebody else."

#### SPEECHLESS

But I hadn't heard Alyx speak yet. After all, what's the point of a character looking realistic if they deliver a line less convincingly than a *Home And Away* extra? Again, I wasn't disappointed. "Do you want my help or not?" Yes please Alyx. Hold on, I'm talking to a bloody computer game. "If you want my help, we'd better get moving." OK, I'm ready when you are. Shit! I'm

doing it again. In fact, I nearly did say those things out loud. She really was that convincing.

Her eyes gave me attitude, her body swayed as she gesticulated to make her point, and as she spoke her lips formed every syllable to near lip-reading standards. "After we got the faces and expressions right, we decided we had to go beyond the standard puppet, one-bone mouth look that we had in *Half-Life*, when characters spoke. Creating realistic lip-synching and acting was a really hard thing to do. We came up with a system that can go through and take the basic structures of a WAV file and extract the data for the mouth movement. So you can extract your sound or line of dialogue, inbed it into a WAV file independent of the game's language, and play it back across the facial animation system. This system identifies the sounds and volume which dictate the size of the opening and closing of the

mouth.

So you could drop in a line in English or Spanish and it will lip-synch it accordingly."

#### THE OLD MEETS THE NEW

So onto the more specific areas of the game, starting with the cast, which is a mixture of the familiar, the new and mixture of the two. "We've taken some of the generic characters from *Half-Life* and evolved them here by giving them names and specific faces" began Doug as he loaded up a whole new level full of characters. "So for example, the African-American scientist who was in every third room in *Half-Life* (check out the Scientist Makeover panel for more on this), is now Dr Eli Vance, Alyx's father. He's the guy who'll tell you what happened between the end of *Half-Life* and the start of *Half-Life 2*. You'll be

**"We wanted our characters to deliver lines with emotion..."**

**DOUG LOMBARDI**  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, VALVE



seeing a lot of tie-ins like that, where you'll find out who certain people were from Black Mesa." Sounds intriguing, tell us more. "Eli has brought Alyx up to be a bit of an inventor. As a result, she's built a side-kick robot called Dog." Doug homed in on Dog, a large yet friendly looking robot who will no doubt pack some hefty firepower. Strafing left, the camera fixed on a familiar looking individual. Barney, the fat security guard. "We've made Barney a defined guy with pretty noticeable characteristics. There won't be loads of Barney's this time round, just the one." Doug also showed me the G-Man, looking sinister in his sharp attire, and some Alien Slaves. Alien Slaves? In the good-guys room? What was all that about? "In the last game, Alien Slaves were the bad guys, but they've moved over to your side." I pressed him for specifics on how this will come about, but Doug simply flashed me a smile which said it all. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

After this we moved to an area which Doug referred to as his Character Zoo, a series of rooms filled with enemies new and old. Reprising their role as cannon fodder are the Bullsquids and Head Crabs, although this time there's a whole family of the latter, ranging from the tiny to the unsettlingly large. Likewise,

Zombies reappear, the symbiosis of the face-hugging Head Crabs and the hapless humans they infest, as do the ceiling hanging, string-on-a-mouth Barnacles, boasting incredibly detail with their multiple moving parts, which made them look little short of horrific. Apparently, there'll be more than 50 different enemies in all.

### ANTS AND LIONS

Finished with the familiar, Doug moved onto the new, starting off with Starship Trooper-like aliens called Antlions and the Antlion Guards – a larger, tougher and altogether more terrifying prospect than its smaller, generic cousin. The light shone off their armour plated backs as they twitched, ready to spring a deadly attack. Moving into another room, Doug introduced me to a host of new, biomechanical enemies.

Scanners are small flying units, with the ability to track you if you try to escape or hide. A host of turrets and hulking biomech troopers stood menacingly by them,

while the gas mask clad police (the replacements for *Half-Life*'s marines) looked instantly hostile. "We're trying to make it really obvious who's positive and who's negative in the game," stated Doug as he moved to an outdoor area, where the really heavy-duty enemies were based. I looked on in awe as we rounded a corner, to be met by a 90ft high, three-legged Strider, towering into the sky and armed to the fillings with machine guns that could fillet a whale in seconds, let alone a speccy ginger scientist. They stalked backwards and forwards, each step sending shudders through the level and chills down my spine. "As you can see we're doing full animation on these guys. One of the interesting things about them was getting the collision detection correct, so that it looks right when they're taking steps. These guys may need to climb stairs, or walk over

## THE ART OF XEN

### NO MORE HOP-SCOTCH IN AN ALIEN WORLD

Just in case you were worried, *Half-Life 2* won't have any levels set in Xen. "We weren't super-happy with some aspects of Xen, so I think that we're more interested in bringing Xen to earth, and melding it with real world environments." Anyone who spent half a day jumping wildly and frustratingly around the alien world will no doubt be mightily relieved. And for those of you who didn't get that far in *Half-Life*, don't worry, you didn't miss much.





**“I’ve never  
been so  
nervous  
or excited  
about  
playing a  
game”**







These screenshots may look stunning, but they don't even come close to showing just how life-like these characters actually are.

## THE LEVELLERS

### MOD TOO MUCH FOR YOU? THEN HOW ABOUT A LEVEL INSTEAD?

Those of you who prefer to set your sights a little lower than creating a whole game, will be more than catered for. In fact, Doug claims it couldn't be easier, thanks to a whole set of new tools and automated systems that'll make life simple for aspiring level creators. "We want to put the power in the hands of the level designers, so they can make fun experiences and not have to make models or sounds. We've made a system so that sound, property and size are all automated. You can kick a can and it will make a different sound to a barrel. We've created an industrial prop farm, so you can go in and take what you need. You can even make a level and try it out without needing to put in all the graphical details first. Once you're happy, you can get the artist to add the detail."

uneven terrain, and all the while there's a whole load of work that's going on under the hood to make sure all this stuff comes to life, which we think will make the game really unique."

Finally, sensing my impatience to see the game in action, Doug quickly showed me a room full of extras, citizens of City 17 who will go about their lives around you. "These people won't have quite the level of facial animation that the main characters will have, as they won't be delivering any heavy duty lines. They'll all be unique, but many of them will be variations of each other." And on that note, he quit out of the level. It was time for me to get my hands dirty.

### LIGHTS. CAMERA, ACTION

I've never been so nervous, or as excited about playing a game. I looked around, to find I was standing on a basic but

sturdy wooden bridge spanning the gap over a river, whose shimmering water lapped serenely against the wooden beams. Suddenly, tranquillity gave way to panic, as two hideous, faceless zombies came shambling towards me. As they approached, one of them picked up a barrel and threw it at me. Instinctively I fired, the power of the shotgun shell sending the barrel back at its attacker and making it reel in pain. But the second zombie was still advancing. One well-placed shot to the head sent it flying off the bridge, coming to rest facedown in the water where it bobbed with the tide. But there was no time to celebrate. The other zombie had recovered and was once again advancing, intent on ripping out my lungs and using them as bagpipes. And then, an idea (a first for me). Aiming at the bridge just in front of my assailant

I fired. Shards of wood flew into the air just as the zombie stepped into the now gaping hole, flailing wildly as it sunk into the water, helpless as I finished it off. I looked over at Doug, who was grinning, and realised I was panting like dog in a sauna. Even in that one, short minute, the combination of many of the elements Doug had shown me had came together in one sublime whole.

### MORE, MORE, MORE

I wanted to see more, but first, remembering my journalistic duties, I asked Doug about the weapons and the multiplayer games, but was told that Valve isn't talking about either of those things at this point. So instead, I asked what we can expect from the AI. This time, he was more than happy to elaborate. "We're taking the old AI system from *Half-Life* and adding

some things to make it more intense and real, so that it has more layers and dimensions. The two most notable things that are really important are the AI combat pathways and NPC behaviour. In the original game, enemies didn't jump to grab you. So you could jump over a waterway and you'd lose the threat behind you. Not this time though. Now the enemies can look for you, they can jump onto and walk over complex surfaces. If you're running away, jumping on crates to get away from a Head Crab, then it'll chase after you, so that you have to deal with it. The other thing was, in *Half-Life*, characters like Barney, wouldn't follow you for long. That was because Barney couldn't get to certain parts of the level and so would have to stay behind. Which of course won't happen in *Half-Life 2*." And what about the actual combat AI, what nuances can





Characters will show emotion through their facial expressions.

**"HL2's AI system has been designed to give the player a sense of total freedom and immersion"**

we expect there? "If an enemy sees you as a threat, but there's also another creature in the area that's also a threat, the AI will work out which is the greater threat to it and attack that target first."

To prove his last point, Doug fired up a recording he'd made of one of the levels. In it, Gordon attacked an Antlion Guard before running away and taking cover under some rocks. In a show of canny determination the Antlion probed the makeshift shelter from every side, trying, struggling, but ultimately failing to reach its quarry. From the distance came the rhythmic pulses of an engine. Seeing his opportunity, Gordon sped off towards the sound, pursued by a now incensed Antlion Guard. Within seconds, they were in sight of an armoured vehicle guarded by marines. The terrified soldiers opened fire on sight at the Antlion Guard, who waded in viciously, clawing rabidly at its new targets, and ripping them to shreds. Then it turned to the vehicle. Sniffing at it at first, it gave it a tentative shove, sending the APC rocking sideways onto two wheels. A blue flare arched from the vehicle into the sky, as the marines desperately called for reinforcement. Seconds later, the APC was sliding down a ravine, toppled by a ferocious attack by the Antlion Guard. While it was still

occupied, Gordon unloaded a clip into the beast, and as it slumped to the ground, exhaling its last and sending a cloud of dust spiralling into the air, a drop ship full of reinforcements arrived.

#### ENTER THE G-MAN

"That was all AI, came a voice from the far end of the room." It was Gabe, who had come back to sit through the final parts of the demonstration. "If you played that level yourself, it could have ended up completely differently. Nothing you just saw was scripted." I must have looked amazed, probably disbelieving, as Gabe took a seat next to me, and explained how HL2's AI system has been designed in order to give the player a sense of total freedom and immersion. "Because the AI can react in so many different ways, you'll never know what it's going to do. Is it going to smash through a door, open it, cut a hole in it? This makes them seem scarier and more consequential than your average AI. The way we see it is that if a creature is no more than a weapon's delivery system, then that creates a really narrow choice of interaction possibilities. If humans can climb ladders and open doors, you have to let them be able to do it. There are other creatures that can do things you can't do, like the Antlions who can jump

## A HALF-LIFE BEYOND THE SHELF

### VALVE TO MAKE EVERY MOD-MAKERS DREAM COME TRUE

One of the things that made *Half-Life* so successful is the massive support it received from the mod-making community. *Counter-Strike*, *Day Of Defeat* and *Natural Selection* are just three of the many superb mods spawned by a collection of ingenious and talented mod makers. With *Half-Life 2*, Valve is trying to cater for these very same people even more than with *Half-Life*. As Doug Lombardi explains, "As we were building the engine from scratch we wanted to make sure everything we did tied the mod maker in mind."

So does that mean it will be easier for people to create mods this time around? "Yes and no. No because the quality bar is going higher. The artists are going to be somewhat under the gun to come up with more convincing characters and higher-res textures. But we've made things simpler for the level designers and animators (see *The Lavaliers* panel). We're using one of the programs used in Hollywood for animation by Pixar and Disney. We're going for the same level of quality in our characters and levels of



Expect plenty of mods for HL2.

animation as those guys. We're going to be giving samples of what we're doing to the mod-makers and we're planning to have a big mod event to train those guys up on the new tools. We'll also be working out better ways to make the transition from the animation package to our game engine, so it's seamless."

How about putting in lip-synched dialogue? "Absolutely. Mod-makers will be able to invoke all of the emotions and facial expressions. We've tried to make things easier for them to create characters with all of the automated systems." Better start planning your mods now, the possibilities look amazing.

## REQUIRES AND DESIRES

### IT WON'T COST THE EARTH TO SAVE IT.

After the daunting prospect of having to invest in a Cray Super Computer to be able to play *Doom III*, it'll come as a relief to many to hear that the minimum spec for *Half-Life 2* is likely to be a mere PIII 700, with 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card. I played an un-optimised version of the game on a 2GHz machine and it ran more smoothly than a greased up Japanese shuttle-train. But will it still be playable on lower-spec machines? Doug feels confident it will: "A lot of the things like the shiny surfaces will be lost with lower-end machines, but the physics are processor based, so as long as you'll have roughly a 700MHz machine, the physics and character animations won't be something you'll lose." Which will come as a relief to anyone who has an older machine, but lacks £1,000 in loose change to buy a new one.





to places that you can't. This will also influence how a creature can get to you and will let it vary its attack strategies."

But how does this translate to a sense of freedom within the whole gaming world? "We wanted our characters to act very realistically and naturally towards you. We also wanted to create an immersive experience. So you want everyone around you to react realistically to you, as well as feeling that you're immersed in a very strong narrative. One of the things we had in *Half-Life* were scripted sequences on the other side of locked doors so you couldn't interfere with them. But now we feel that if you close off choices to the player you're making a mistake. We had many challenges in getting the AI to talk to the level design. How we could hint to the AI that there may be something interesting in the level for them to interact with. So if a radio says something interesting and a character hears it, they may walk over to it, to hear it better. If you then shot the radio, the AI would ask itself what a reasonable reaction would be and act on that decision." It was all getting too much, and what's more, everything Doug and Gabe had claimed about the game was being backed up with hard evidence - with in-game footage.

Another pre-recorded scene showed a firefight in City 17, with locals battling two gargantuan biomechs. In an attempt to avoid a confrontation, Gordon ran through a nearby door, closed it and crouched down. Silence. Then, a mechanical buzz infected the air. Gordon looked up to see that a camera had been thrust through the letterbox and was scanning for him. A couple of seconds later, it disappeared. The door buckled, then shattered as the biomech burst through. Hostilities resumed.

The next level saw Gordon fighting six Antlions, which jumped on ledges to get to him as he desperately tried to get away. Then, to show off the particle effects, I was shown a level on a burning cargo ship, the flames licking at the scenery and spreading like a disease as it consumed the vessel. But before what Gabe and Doug referred to as the 'Finale' I was given one more chance to take the controls and pit myself against easily the most unpredictable and life-like AI of any FPS to date. Leading a prison break-out, I had to get past two guards, who were taking cover behind a set of barrels. There was only one thing for it. Crouching down I rolled a grenade into their position, and watched in awe

as their bodies hurtled through the air and over the barrels, coming to a rest, lifeless and crumpled, on the other side.

#### A HARD DAY'S PLAY

And so to the 'Finale...'

Day had begun its slow decent into dusk as Gordon walked slowly towards a majestic, 60ft-high archway. From a distance, something caught the eye. The sound of machine parts and heavy footsteps replaced the tranquil calm, as a 90ft, three-legged Strider appeared, pausing in front of the now dwarfed archway. It tried to shift it with a round of machine gun fire, but realising that force wouldn't work, it ducked under instead. "Follow me!" came from behind. Wheeling round, Gordon spotted Alyx, who was gesturing for him to follow her into a sewer. Once inside, the two characters stood breathlessly staring at each other. Alyx was smiling. Then, slowly, her eyes moved from Gordon to look at something behind him and her smile morphed into a look of genuine horror. Gordon swivelled, just in time to see a giant blue tentacle reaching for a policeman who had clearly followed them into the sewer, but unaware of what was behind him. The tentacle

wrapped around his body, snatching him into the murky depths below. As the demo faded the room fell silent, and I was convinced that I had just witnessed one of the most cinematic, atmospheric and realistic moments in gaming history. A fitting 'Finale' indeed, I thought, blinking violently as Doug switched the lights on, signalling the end of an incredible day.

#### TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Words failed me. My body felt exhausted as I relaxed my taught muscles, drained from the tension of watching a game which is re-writing the rule book and making a mockery out of every other first-person shooter I've ever seen. If you don't believe me, buy a ticket to E3, and find out for yourself. One thing's for sure though, come September, the world of gaming will change forever, and just like four years ago, it's Valve that is showing us the way. With 40 hours of gameplay promised, it's going to be one hell of a ride. All of a sudden, September seems like a very, very long way away... [E3]





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## A bird's eye view of war

# BATTLEFIELD COMMAND



Battlefield Command allows you to join any side.



"Don't panic!" Corporal Jones faces the Nazis.



A bridge too far? Not for the Brits.

**Elvis Bacon** braves cabbage, cold and unnecessarily patriotic monuments to reveal what lies in store for the latest pretender to the WWII strategy crown

### THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** 1C

**PUBLISHER** Codemasters

**WEBSITE** [www.codemasters.com](http://www.codemasters.com) or [int.games.1c.ru](http://int.games.1c.ru), but it's a bit of a mess)

**ETA** Q1 2004

### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Unparalleled attention to detail and historical accuracy
- Zoom from bird's eye to ant's kneecap views with no loss of detail
- 1km<sup>2</sup> of tactical battlefield, 16km<sup>2</sup> of decorative carnage
- Campaign across the entire European theatre of war
- Develop an ongoing relationship with troops and units

## CV



## 1C

Russian company 1C was founded in 1991 and has since become the leading publisher and developer in the former USSR, with two internal studios.

**2001** *Konung: Legends Of The North*. An RPG with RTS elements set in 7th century Scandinavia.

**2000** *IL-2 Sturmovik* is Oleg Maddox's superb combat flight sim, and remains one of PC.ZONE's favourites.

Hide and seek WWII-style.



**A DECADE** or more since we were happily moving little green blocks around the screen and calling them armies, *Battlefield Command* appears on the horizon – a real-time strategy wargame with more ground level gloss than the average first-person shooter.

Some people might dismiss the look of the thing as trivial, but before we get onto more weighty concerns (or pointless nonsense, delete as applicable) like game mechanics and verisimilitude, *Battlefield Command* deserves credit simply for being ridiculously pleasing on the eye even at this early stage of development. This wargame is so detailed you can zoom down from a bird's eye view of an entire battlefield right into the bushes



# EUROPE AT WAR 1939-45



*Farming With Tanks* – Russia's top TV show.



Draw distance is impressive.



That's one less tank to render onscreen.



Oleg Maddox's previous game *IL-2 Sturmovik* was a classic.



The *Battlefield* graphics engine allows you to zoom right into the action.

where Boris the anti-tank gunner is having a quick slash. I kid you not.

You might reasonably expect a vast array of realistic vehicles, day and night transitions, water reflections and some quality explosion effects. But wind rustling the leaves of the trees and individual blades of grass crushed as tanks roll by? That's above and beyond the call of duty, and then some.

## WITH LOVE, FROM RUSSIA

*Battlefield Command* is Russian developer 1C's (of *IL-2* fame) first strategy title. The general idea is that you take charge of a small number of units in major battles throughout the European theatre of war – from the invasion of Poland through to the war on the Eastern front, D-Day, the liberation of Paris and the fall of Germany in 1945. You'll have the choice of playing the Allied/Axis dividing line from just about every perspective, and your missions will involve a host of challenges,

from recon and rescue missions to city skirmishes, ambushes or sabotage.

As often happens, the realtime strategy tag is somewhat misleading. *Battlefield Command* is a resolutely tactical game, presenting you with small but immediate problems in the midst of a wider conflict. At most you might be responsible for around 20 units at a given time. Then again, a unit is defined as anything from a lone infantryman to a tank and its entire crew, so don't go expecting an easy ride.

The net result will be few cavalier tank-rushes and more wet-nursing inexperienced troops and hard to replace vehicles through the grim realities of modern warfare. The troops you command will each have their own personality and skills, and although the same grunts may or may not be available to you in every mission, a decent commander will still be able to develop their abilities to the point where a T-34

**"The general idea is that you take charge of a small number of units in major battles throughout the European theatre of war"**

crewed entirely by nurses might still acquit itself well. It should be a lot more of a personal experience than the average strategy game.

Resource management chores will be minimal for the most part. It'll be up to you how you kit out your units from a changing pool of available resources and, if you're of the hardcore persuasion, the level of detail runs right through to the choice of handguns and ammunition. But to make the game more accessible for slacker strategists much of this can be automated so that you can concentrate on the simpler joys of life – like blowing stuff up – and occasionally remembering to scavenge useable ammo or fuel from the battlefield.

## TANKS FOR THE MEMORY

So, *Battlefield Command* majors on visual and historical accuracy. Hardly a surprise that, given its parentage. The game uses the *IL-2 Sturmovik* engine re-worked to a





A fuel truck makes its way to a safe spot guarded by tanks.

much higher level of detail with deformable terrain reconstructed from period topographical data. Vehicles are modeled from blueprints and regular visits to Moscow's military museum (why bother with grainy old photos when you can nip down to the park and take a tape measure to a T34 yourself?), and events are played straight out of official archive records.

We're talking realism that's as hardcore as a blindfolded snowboarder attempting a backside 360 while miming the chariot scene from *Ben Hur*. For instance, I now know that German tanks had stencilled markings while Russian ones were usually scruffier, hand-painted jobs. I'm not sure quite how this will change my life, but I'm happy to wait and see.

Perhaps there should be some limits. Filling boxes with individually serial-numbered anti-tank shells, or modeling the spin of mortar shells (as if you can ever see them out of Debug mode) is really taking 'retentive' to sphincter stretching limits.

However, despite the history buff hard-on, the detail is fundamentally there to have a dramatic effect on gameplay. So, for example, survivors of a gun crew will go through new and longer loading animations as they double up on gunnery

chores, and when you shell a building you'll see appropriate levels of damage played out on a room by room basis. Complete with interior décor, of course.

### OBSESSIVE, COMPULSIVE BUT NOT DISORDERED

Normally an overdeveloped obsession with military detail makes me very nervous (in case you hadn't guessed). I start mentally booting the release date back a few months or years and wondering whether the misplaced desire to model Corporal Smith's shoelaces might cause something trivial like, ah, a playable game to be forgotten.

But the 1C development team are an odd bunch. In their modern Moscow offices – walls freshly painted in a bouncy shade of grey – there are few pictures or toys, no death metal T-shirts, and not a pizza carton in sight. It's quite frightening.

Instead, they're tidy, disciplined and scarily on top of things. This, after years of listening to hairy-arsed US programmers telling me exactly how awesome and like uh, really, uh, cool their product is going to be if it ever comes out (or how low-rent Porsche Boxsters are, which is clearly far more important to them), is a blessed relief. A development team looking like



Battlefield Command also gives you aeroplanes to play with.

## MEET THE RUSSIANS

### PIRATING THE PIRATES IN MOSCOW

Moscow is modernising like crazy, buzzing and bullish in an '80s kind of way. Yet our host still paid for a meal for ten (including cabbage) with a carrier bag full of cash.

Neo-bleak and Mock-sombre architecture jostle for space with glittering new shopping centres, 130metre cast iron patriotic monuments and cake-like constructions straight out of the Grimm Book of Edible Cathedrals. It's a funny old place to do business.

Not least because it's a city where a full price PC game retails at something like US\$3, or about two quid to you and me. Why? Because that's what the pirate copies cost, and pirate copies are sold openly in shops. In fact, they're almost brands in their own right – cheekily slapping their own logos beside the real ones and claiming to be 'in association' with them. So if you try to charge any more for original software than the pirates do for theirs, you don't sell. Two quid it is then.

There are laws against this sort of thing. Unfortunately, my hosts claim, since one of the largest pirate companies is effectively state owned, the laws are as much use as earmuffs for kippers. In fact, one of the biggest issues in their software business right now is pirates pirating other pirates. Now the concept of a pirate trying to encourage brand loyalty is definitely a new one on me, but it'd almost be worth sponsoring ELSPA to open a Russian branch just to see how they'd deal with it.



An ELSPA tank on its way to Russia.

## "With a year until release, the Battlefield Command game engine is already performing minor miracles"

they might actually do something on time? Wonders will never cease.

With a year until release, the game engine is already performing minor miracles and the animations and the unit modeling are well on schedule. The interface isn't finalised as yet, but is most likely to be a conventional mouse, keyboard and hotkey combination. Meanwhile, 1C is working with designers from Codemasters on mission balancing, multiplayer, and fine tuning the AI.

If they can get that right – and I'm not even going to attempt to predict how the AI and mission difficulty will pan out at this stage – then *Battlefield Command* will be a

major success. *IL-2 Sturmovik* was a hell of a flight sim, but one that lent itself mostly to the purist. This game should have something to please both historical warmongers and the gamer at large. Cute as a heavily-armed button, chock-full of detail and with an interestingly personal feel that you don't normally get in strategy wargames. It's a title we'll be watching carefully when it previews officially at E3.

But if there's one thing about *Battlefield Command* that really brings home how far we've moved on since those early days of green-block armies it's this: the game has an active battlefield of 1km<sup>2</sup> which you might think is more than enough. However, 1C is scripting entire (historically accurate) battles to be waged around a 16km<sup>2</sup> periphery just for the hell of it.

Forget the years we've spent trying to clip, hide or generally fudge unnecessary unit action and save a few precious processor cycles, this game is putting them in just to give your missions some extra decoration and a bit of context. Creating a warzone just for the ambience? That's an excuse even Tony Blair hasn't come up with yet. [E]



"Mull of Kintyre, oh mist rolling in..."



It's not what's right about war,

It's about what's left



## WORLD WAR II

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The icons in the bottom right-hand corner refer to BloodRayne's supernatural powers.



What a way to go...



BloodRayne gets her teeth into the Nazi hordes. Mmmmmmm, Hitler-Fresh.

#### THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Terminal Reality  
**PUBLISHER** VU Games  
**WEBSITE** www.bloodrayne.com  
**ETA** May

#### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- A sexy vampire who kills Nazis. What more do you want?
- Immense amounts of blood and gore
- Great supernatural powers
- Funny dialogue and sound effects

**GOTHS EH?** Despite the fact that The Sisters of Mercy and their pasty-faced black coat-wearing ilk have long since been resigned to bargain bin obscurity, our American cousins are still under the impression that spraying patchouli oil about the place and looking miserable is 'cool'.

Hence here's Dallas-based Terminal Reality's *BloodRayne* – a third-person action game starring a sexy leather-clad vampire dominatrix taking on hordes of hellish nazis bent on the resurrection of a terrifying demon who can lay waste to the earth. OK, so the plot doesn't exactly have the sophistication of Jane Austen, but the ability to dispatch Hitler's barmy army in unthinkable gruesome ways, is hugely enjoyable and laugh-out-loud funny.

BloodRayne, you see, is a tad on the gory side. With two large razor-sharp metal blades attached to her arms, any lightning-quick acrobatic jumps and spins can neatly slice and dice nearby enemies, sending chunks of man-flesh arcing into the air and spraying walls with gushes of crimson liquid. BloodRayne can also pick up and fire enemy weaponry, including

shotguns, grenades, machine-guns and pistols – useful for completing the missions which vary from an assault on an undead-infested German castle, to a raid on a Nazi submarine depot.

#### FANCY A PINT?

A major advantage that *BloodRayne* has over wimpy 'alive' videogame characters such as Lara Croft, is that whenever she finds herself short on health, all the garlic-hating heroine has to do is feast upon the warm blood of any fresh victim for an instant inhuman pick-me-up. Also, if you wade through enough enemies in hand-to-hand combat, BloodRayne can be sent



Look mum, no hands.

into a Bloodrage – an intensely violent state where she literally makes mincemeat of any unfortunate souls who cross her path.

In addition, BloodRayne has supernatural powers that can be called upon to help you in particularly tough battles: Aura Vision allows you to see enemies in the dark, Extruded Vision can be used to scout ahead and Dilated Vision

textures. Also worthy of note are the sound effects, which accompany the ultra-violence with the thuds of bodies hitting the earth, gun shots, splattering blood and ear-bursting screams of agony from BloodRayne's victims.

Terminal Reality has acted like a magpie in the development of *BloodRayne*, stealing shiny ideas from other games – you have the

## "The wickedly satisfying blood-thirsty kills should ensure it has loads of bite"

is a bullet-time effect allowing you to perform more accurate kills and watch the gibs fly in glorious balletic slo-mo.

Enemies in *BloodRayne* include your classic "Schnell, Engländer Dog!" Nazis, as well as unearthly spider-like swamp creatures, zombies and scary, floating demon heads, which you meet in the later levels. Graphically, *BloodRayne* doesn't render anything particularly mesmerising, but the Infernal Engine seems solid and smooth, with large indoor and open-air environments, and detailed character

*Tomb Raider*-style action hero, the *Max Payne*-style shoot-outs, the vampires from *Soul Reaver* and the Nazis from, well, every other title at the moment. It's basically a console game, but none the worse for it, with mouse-look added to this PC incarnation. We'll have to wait and see if Terminal Reality manages to sort out the sometimes-iffy AI, and the distinct lack of any mid-level saves (very annoying), but the wickedly satisfying blood-thirsty kills should ensure *BloodRayne* has loads of bite. **A-2**



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You can attack anyone, anywhere at anytime in *Eve's* ruthless dog-eat-dog universe.

#### THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** CCP  
**PUBLISHER** Crowfall Entertainment  
**WEBSITE** [www.eve-online.com](http://www.eve-online.com)  
**ETA** May

#### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Promises to take the *Elite* concept to the next level.
- A totally dynamic player-driven economy.
- The potential to explore and fight among 5,000 star systems with up to 100,000 players.
- Stylish and attractive graphics make this the most striking online game yet.

Let there be light...

# EVE ONLINE: THE SECOND GENESIS

In preparation for next month's review, *Richie Shoemaker* talks to the developers of the latest space combat game vying for the *Elite* crown

**JUST AS** it is impossible to speculate on the latest first-person shooter without referring to the mighty *Half-Life* (or should that be *Half-Life 2* now?), so too it would be a great injustice to comment on a game like *Eve* without mentioning the classic space game *Elite*.

Unlike the recent *Freelancer* and the looming *X2: The Threat* however (both featured in last month's magazine), there appears to be much more to *Eve Online* than the prospect of plundering a vast universe for riches. As was the case with the Braben/Bell classic, trade, mining asteroids, mugging convoys and mercenary work do form the basis of *Eve's* gameplay, but aside from 20 years of gaming history, there is much that separates it from the greatest space adventure of all time.

Most obvious is the unalterable fact that *Eve* can only be played with or against real people. Via the magical medium of the information superhighway, developer CCP claims it can accommodate in excess of 100,000 simultaneous users, a number that, if realised, would put the game in the same league as *EverQuest*. CCP's ambitions are, however, more realistic, with an early target being around 25,000 regulars. Which, when you consider there will only be one *Eve* reality to explore, as opposed to the many servers other online games operate, means friends and foes will still be in abundance.

"Our vision is to create an epic world where players are the movers and shakers in an elaborate social environment," says Hrafnkell Oskarsson, responsible for

creating *Eve's* ever-deepening backstory. "The only way to fulfil that vision is in a huge world where thousands of players vie for economical, political and military power with each other. If we were to break the game across many 'shards' we would never be able to see the dynamic and vibrant online society that we want, plus it would divert the attention of the live team and make our support for each world less than we would like."

#### NEVER STOP LEARNING

Although it is the many ships that are the focus of the graphics and gameplay in *Eve*, the aim isn't so much about bolting on expensive kit to your craft as expanding the skills of your character sitting inside. But rather than have you boring through lumps of rock for months

## CV

### CROWD CONTROL PRODUCTIONS

Crowd Control Productions are Iceland's first and only games developer, and *Eve* is CCP's first and only game.

**1954** Puffins are invented.

**1987** The SugarCube release *Zimday*.

**1989** Frozen food chain *Deino* are taken over by Iceland.

**1997** CCP is formed and its aim is to make the finest online games known to man.





We'd have thought plastic surgery would be better in the future.



**"Eve is not for everyone. It is more competitive and ruthless than other MMORPGs"**

HRAFNKELL OSKARSSON  
DESIGNER, EVE ONLINE



Simply double click on a point in space to travel there.



Player-run corporations can build their own space stations.

on end to 'level up' your mining skill, abilities are bought for cash and effectively installed into the brain over a period of time, which means your character can be learning about some new gadget while you are offline. The emphasis evidently, unlike most RPGs, is on grabbing as much money as you can by whatever means you see fit, rather than wasting time doing tedious tasks to build skills.

"On the individual level, players can advance their character through buying skills and upgrading or buying new ships," says Oskarsson. "But there is a whole new social level to the game where players can create or join a corporation and aim to increase their status within it, and through this, their status within the entire game community."

These player-run corporations are far more advanced than player-run factions in games like *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online*, as Oskarsson explains:

"Corporations are like guilds in other online games, which players can create or join and be assigned a certain role, from lowly positions such as accountant, right up to chief technological officer and CEO. The corporations can own and build space stations, planets, and even whole solar systems. They can then wage war on each other over coveted resources, with the winner being able to dictate the conditions of the surrender."

#### CORPORATE LADDER

"Corporations can also ally with each other to create larger political power blocs," he continues. "Finally, through the superior financial means of these larger organisations, they can engage in large-scale research and manufacture of new items that might be better or cheaper than those found among the NPC empires. Of course, the competition here is just as intense as the fight for resources."

Where *Eve* differs from virtually every other space combat game is in the design of the player interface. The traditional method of control using a joystick to pilot your ship is gone, replaced with a control system closer to that of a real-time strategy game. Your view at all times, whether you are flying or docked, is set so you can admire your ship from all angles, close up or from a distance. Double-click anywhere in space and you will head in that direction. Remarkably, considering interfaces in most 3D strategy games tend to be poor, *Eve*'s is smooth, versatile and far from confusing. The trade off, if you can call it that, is that combat will be much closer to that seen in *Star Trek* rather than *Star Wars*, with battles often decided not just on manoeuvrability and firepower, but on power levels, electronic warfare, stealth and counter-measures too. So no seat-of-the-pants WWII-style dogfighting, it seems.

"Eve is not for everyone," admits Oskarsson, "in that it is maybe more

Building a space station from Meccano can't be a good idea.

#### FAIR GAME



**IF THERE'S ONE THING THAT SEPARATES EVE FROM ITS PEERS, IT'S THE COMBAT**

Combat in MMO games has increasingly become consensual, with players having to literally beg for a scrap unless they are in what might be termed an 'unsafe' or PvP area. *Eve* has no such hang-ups, to the point that anyone is fair game, wherever and whenever they are. You can even turn on your allies if you wish, and when you've blown them out of the sky, you can chase after the escape pod and kill them stone cold dead. Of course if you happen to be in a high security area, you will very likely be chased by the police and destroyed. And if you do 'pod' your victims, you can expect a very large bounty to be put on your head by the victim, who of course will have been genetically reformed at the nearest starbase thanks to the wonders of modern technology.

competitive and ruthless than many other MMORPGs. But this was a conscious decision on our part, and for those that enjoy pitting their wits directly against other humans in a game that supports Player vs Player (PvP) at every level then *Eve* is the game of their dreams."

Though it may be too early to call *Eve* a dream game, having taken part in the recent beta test, I'm of the opinion that CCP has fashioned what could be one of the most important and unique online games since *Ultima Online*, and perhaps even one of the finest space adventures since *Elite*. The prospects look good, but with more mass-market online licenses like *Star Wars Galaxies* looming, the reality could be very different. **PCZ**





Up close and personal in *Chaser*. This is what is commonly known as a stand-off.



Eye spy with my little eye. No one is safe in *Chaser*.

#### THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Cauldron  
**PUBLISHER** JoWood  
**WEBSITE** www.jowood.com  
**ETA** Q2 2003

#### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Gripping plot powers a compelling one-player game
- Not much fawning about – the action rolls thick and fast
- Strong multiplayer support makes for a complete package
- Some great physics effects, including superb glass shattering effects
- *Max-Payne* like Bullet Time slo-mo mode

## CV

### CAULDRON

From the land of *Martin Korda*, Cauldron is the first developer to come to international prominence from the Slovak Republic. They're based in the capital Bratislava.

**1996** Cauldron's first game, an obscure puzzler called *Quadrix* becomes a sensation in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

**1997** Fiendishly difficult turn-based sci-fi strategy *Spellcross* brings Cauldron to the world's attention.

**2000** Turn-based/real-time hybrid *Battle Isle: The Andosia War* is released. A pretty good effort, capitalising on Cauldron's experience on *Spellcross*.

**2002** Work begins on *Conan*, a game licensed from Conan Properties, the company which owns rights for Robert E Howard's famous barbarian.

# The thrill of the... CHASER

The battle for freedom rages on Earth and on Mars. Steve O'Hagan sets off in pursuit of the shooter that offers the best of both worlds...

**JOHN CHASER** awakes aboard an orbiting space station. He doesn't know where he is. He doesn't know who he is. He doesn't know who these heavily armed goons trying to kill him are either. But there's nothing better than a brisk fire-fight with a bunch of homicidal commandos to bring a man to his senses.

The 'you're in at the deep end' opening of *Chaser* is an example of how to totally immerse a player into a game. Before you know it, in a blur of confusion and cordite you are fighting for your life. The facility is self-destructing. Pipes burst, panels blow off the walls, and all the while that hostile assault squad is on your tail. There's no time to take stock. You need a weapon and you need one fast. This is high-tension gaming. And if *Chaser* fulfills its potential, you'll be hooked all the way from these opening salvos traded above the earth, right the way up to the ultra-violent conclusion played out among the colonies of Mars.

We're not short of a shooter or two these days, that's for sure. So Cauldron,

the Bratislavan developer of *Chaser* has pulled out the stops to make this stand out as a shining example of its art. The high-impact single-player game, crammed full of cut-scenes and scripted set pieces, is matched by a multiplayer aspect complete with full *Counter-Strike*-esque objective-based game modes. The bone-crunching traditional FPS shoot-outs are complimented by a *Max-Payne*-style Bullet Time slo-mo adrenaline mode (see the boxout). And the slickly-drawn, hugely-detailed locations and legions of well-animated foes are matched by a massive set of shooters to lay waste to all and sundry with. Not forgetting a top-of the range physics system that will reduce you to wandering around levels looking for any remaining panes of glass for you to shoot and watch shatter just one more time.

To make it all happen, Cauldron has developed its own 3D engine called CloakNT. We don't pretend to understand it, but if you throw the words anisotropic, specular, bump-mapping volumetric and refractive up in the air, they'd probably

come back down again and form a sentence describing just some of this impressive bit of coding's capabilities.

What this means to us gamers is that some of the pictures *Chaser* paints are damn sweet. Lighting is utterly convincing, down to the tell-tale shadows it casts. You can practically reach out and touch the different materials of the objects you encounter, from polished mirrors to rough concrete walls. Blood splatters walls and floors after fire-fights, and oil paintings adorn walls. Exquisite Japanese prints only reveal their full detail when you spend the time to examine them – from the grim slums of 2044 Earth, to the functional metallics of the orbital facilities, to the eerie sepia vistas of Mars, each location is imbued with impressive character and detail.

#### BOOM WITH A VIEW

We ain't here to admire the view though. We're here to blow it to hell. And though the game is set a full 40 years in the future, most of the 25 or so guns on offer will be familiar to fans of contemporary based





All the death animations are eerily correct.



Those who live in greenhouses shouldn't use automatic weapons.

first-person shooters. Fast-firing though inaccurate Ingram's M10 submachine guns complement Colt M4 assault rifles complete with telescopic sights and advanced versions of the classic AK-47. And if this kind of firepower isn't enough, mortars and heavy cannons can be manned when the serious fighting starts.

Most of the weapons have the customary secondary fire, whether it be a sniper zoom or under-slung grenade launcher, and all of them are capable of dealing heavy-duty death.

The flipside of the coin is that the array of goons, thugs, shock troops and mercenaries that stand between you and the end of the game are pretty heavily tooled themselves. You'll appreciate the crucial advantage of the precious slo-mo 'adrenaline mode', believe us.

All this hot lead has to hit something, and in the fury of combat, it's seldom the intended target. Though the physics engine isn't quite next-generation, falling short of producing true rag-doll death sequences and the like, it brings the violence to visceral life. Rounds ricochet off walls

**"Enemies spasm in pain, spin and fall under your hail of fire with the finesse of Hollywood stuntmen"**

## BLACK AND WHITE BULLET TIME

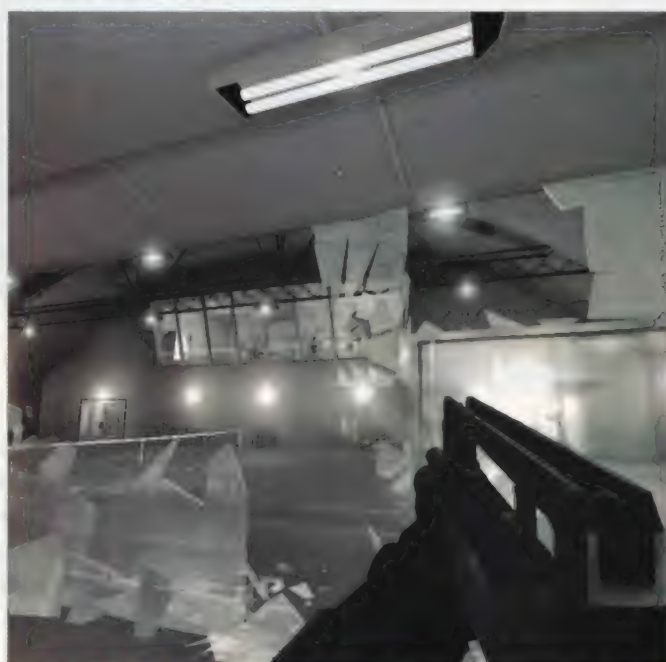
**IF IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY, MAX PAYNE CAN FEEL PRETTY GOOD ABOUT ITSELF**

It's not big and it's not clever, but slo-mo 'Bullet Time' blood-letting looks pretty damn cool. And *Chaser's* developers obviously played *Max Payne* and thought to themselves, "We'll have a bit of that."

Machine guns spit rounds at agonising intervals, bodies contort and recoil almost balletically. Spent brass arcs through the air before clattering on the floor. Shards of glass fill the air as windows implode, and bodies hang in the air as they are flung several feet backwards under a hail of high velocity bullets.

This is adrenaline mode. You don't get an unlimited amount, but for tough encounters, the edge it gives you is vital – the adrenaline recharges when you're injured to balance out the harder levels. You hit the key, the action reverts to black and white, and everything sounds like a record being played slowly backwards.

But this being a first-person shooter and all, you don't get the eye-catching leaps and rolls from your character that *Max Payne* made so much of, meaning that much of the aesthetic appeal of this method of play is lost. It's difficult to say how well this system will suit the FPS genre, but once we've played through the game and reviewed it, you'll be the first to know.

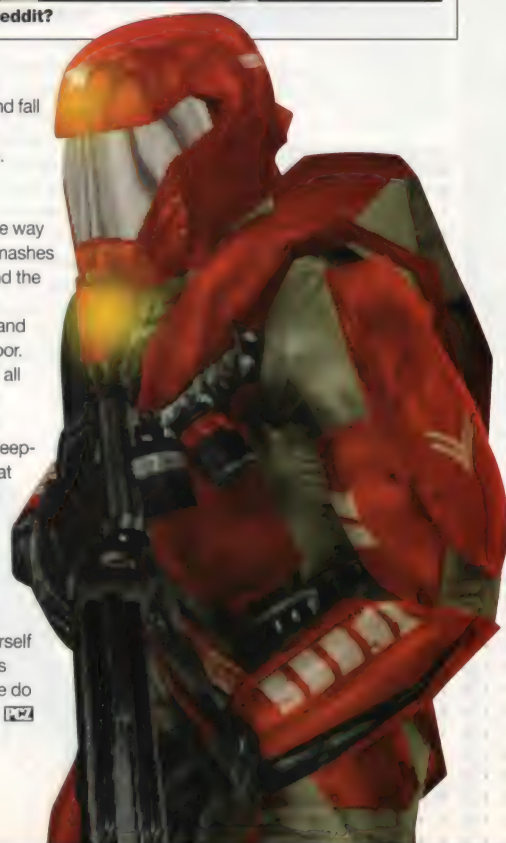


A right pane in the ass. Geddit?

leaving ugly scars behind, and enemies spasm in pain, spin and fall under your hail of fire with the finesse of Hollywood stuntmen.

### SHATTERING

But most impressive of all is the way glass splinters, shatters and smashes – hit a large pane at its base and the whole sheet will collapse from above, splintering into a thousand shards as it implodes on the floor. Fire a grenade into a room and all the windows will blow out with impressive force. It really looks good, as well as fulfilling that deep-rooted vandalistic tendency that exists in all of us. Well, all of us on *ZONE*, at least. It's only a few months off now, and it won't be long before we've got a full review to see if it all stacks up right in the finished product. Until then, satisfy yourself with our exclusive demo on this month's discs. Now, where else do you get that kind of treatment? **PC**







He just picked that tree up. Tip: don't mess with him.

If I had a...

# WARHAMMER ONLINE

**Online RPGs: for every one thing they get right, they usually get ten things wrong. Why should this one be any different? Chris Anderson knows why, and by the time you finish reading this preview, so will you**

## THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Climax  
**PUBLISHER** Warhammer Online  
**WEBSITE** [www.warhammeronline.com](http://www.warhammeronline.com)  
**ETA** Spring 2004

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Truly diverse landscapes and creatures
- The 'perfect' player-versus-player system
- Stunning visuals: look out EQ2
- Flexible character development

CV

CLIMAX

## CLIMAX

Climax was previously best known for its console titles, but in recent years, it has concentrated more on PC development. Recent titles include:

- 2002** *MotoGP* – more racing, but of the two-wheeled variety.
- 2002** *Rally Fusion: Race of Champions* – cars, racing other cars, in a rally.
- 2001** *The Art Of Magic* – a great sequel to the original *Magic And Mayhem*.

**AS ONE** of the biggest names in pen-and-paper role-playing makes its first entrance into the online gaming arena, hopes are high that this will result in an intriguing addition to the genre. But as ever, trained sceptics like yours truly are asking all the usual questions before the game has been completed. You know the kind of questions we mean. The awkward ones. The ones that make development teams cringe when they realise they've 'forgotten' the most fundamental element of their overall game design. The type of questions that often make programmers kick themselves as

they realise they will either have to start over or just plod on and release whatever godforsaken mess they've created anyway (this is the rule rather than the exception as you will no doubt know if you have played any online RPG when it was first released).

In the murky depths of Nottingham, a company called Climax is working with Games Workshop to bring you the game that will be known as *Warhammer Online*. They are not afraid of my questions. They are prepared. They have thought through just about every element of modern online RPGs and now, with a concept they

believe to be sound, they are working hard to bring their vision to fruition. Let's take a look at the story so far.

## BORED GAME

It matters not if you have no interest in the original *Warhammer* board game. It's true that the game's characters and gameworld will be based on those in the original pen-and-paper affair, and as such, will feature the usual fantasy fare: elves, wizards, goblins, necromancers – you know the routine – but the similarity ends there. Climax is targeting hardcore and casual online gamers first and foremost,





## THE KILLING GAME

**YES, PLAYERS CAN KILL OTHER PLAYERS. BUT, NO, IT IS NOT COMPULSORY**

*Warhammer Online* uses a PvP system that can safely be described as revolutionary. The option to fight other players is open only to those who choose careers that guide them towards PvP combat. You can only attack other players whose careers are also flagged for PvP combat. This is a whole new approach to creating an environment that supports PvP, but does not force it on the player, and it's one that is almost certain to keep everyone happy no matter what their views on PvP are.



No clue what that is, but it doesn't look happy.



Now that's what we call a monster!



Where's that insecticide when you need it?



Stunning visuals, but at what price? Time will tell.



Creatures like this can be generated in no time at all.

and while fans of the board game will, no doubt, glean extra enjoyment because they know the scenario somewhat, the core of the game will be designed from the ground up for all types of players to get their teeth into.

To reflect this, the actual gameworld will be huge and diverse with a sense of character that changes dramatically, depending where you are. You will not

be travelling from one 'zone' to the other à la *EverQuest*. Instead, you will be traversing immense, seamless landscapes, and the environment will reflect the culture of the part of the gameworld you're travelling through. It's an ambitious approach, but one that we feel will work, having seen the game in action, mainly due to Climax's 'drag and drop' landscape technology which allows

them to create basic tile sets of structures, and design them on the fly in any way they see fit. We were given a demonstration of this technology and the one thing that struck us most was how easy it will be to create new content with these incredible tools. A few mouse clicks is literally all it takes to create completely new buildings from existing ones.

The same applies to character and creature creation. Basic monsters were transformed completely from simple models to complex and detailed creations while we watched.

You can expect *Warhammer Online* to be truly diverse and varied as a result, and this is vitally important to an online role-playing game that hopes to capture the attention of a huge audience for an extended period of time.

### WHAT TREADMILL?

*Warhammer Online* is wisely steering clear of the conventional level system where you gain experience that results in an increase in levels as you progress. Instead, it is using a skill-based system not entirely dissimilar to *Asheron's Call 2*, but hopefully more varied. This is the score: choose a career path, choose

your base skills, then work your way up a skill-tree, taking the path which most suits your style of play. If you want to use magic, follow the tree accordingly; if you want to play a warrior and whack things on the head, the same applies.

The lack of a level system will encourage people to concentrate on their skills and what they are doing in the game, instead of worrying constantly about levelling up to keep up with the Joneses. That said, players will earn 'fame' by taking on opponents equal to or tougher than them, and NPCs will react accordingly depending on their alignment. This fame system was first introduced by *Ultima Online*. It worked for Origin, we are confident it will work equally well for Climax.

It may be early days for *Warhammer Online*, but from where we're standing, the game is heading in all the right directions. No level treadmill, limited downtime, excellent graphics, plenty of variety, a revolutionary PvP system, it's difficult to see how they can go wrong at this point. You can be sure that we will be following the game closely through its development process and bringing you more news on this highly promising title as we get it. [X]



There's huge diversity in characters.



Rats that look scary? Surely not.





Control of the secret police is just one way to control the masses.

#### THE DETAILS

**DEVELOPER** Elixir Studios

**PUBLISHER** Eidos

**WEBSITE** www.novistrana.com

**ETA** Summer 2003

#### WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fully working cities in which to play your power games
- No set path to success, choose whatever ideology suits your needs
- Orchestrate hundreds of 'actions', from leaflet campaigns to mass rioting
- Real-life concepts of class and belief systems accurately simulated
- Decidedly complex game structure allows for total freedom of choice

# CV

#### ELIXIR STUDIOS

*Republic* is Elixir's first toe in the gaming water, although company founder Demis Hassabis has been in the business of creating games for some time now.

**1994** Demis joins UK development powerhouse Bullfrog under the guidance of Peter Molyneux. Helps to create the legend that is *Theme Park*.

**1997** He joins the newly relocated Molyneux at Lionhead and has a hand in the programming of *Black & White*.

**1998** Decides to fly on his own and sets up Elixir Studios in London's fashionable Camden. *Republic* is tentatively announced.

**1999** Wins the prestigious International Grand Master at the Mind Sports Olympiad. Is forever referred to afterwards as 'boy genius, Demis Hassabis'.

**2003** After many delays and postponements, *Republic: The Revolution* finally looks set to appear.

## Pulling the strings...

# REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

LAST  
PREVIEWED  
PCZONE  
ISSUE  
116

**Complex, manipulative, gorgeous to look at, full of menace and destined for ultimate power. But enough about *Paul Presley*, here's a look at *Republic*...**

**THERE ARE** probably worse places for a die-hard Arsenal fan to spend a sunny Tuesday morning than at Chelsea Football Club, but few spring readily to mind. Baghdad, perhaps. Or Tottenham. Considering the amount of internal political fighting, boardroom squabbles and behind-the-scenes power struggles that have affected the club over the past few years however, there probably aren't many better places for Eidos to have held the public unveiling of Elixir's coup d'état simulator, *Republic: The Revolution* than Stamford Bridge's sprawling leisure complex. Again, Baghdad maybe. Or Leeds.

You may well have been following *Republic*'s oft-delayed progress for some time now, but for the uninitiated it's essentially a game of power, corruption and influence. The fictional East European country of Novistrana is suffering under the cold grip of a ruthless dictator type, your job is to build a strong enough power base to oust him from the leadership and grasp the presidency for yourself. Whether you're any less ruthless, cold

and dictatorial is up to you and it's in the exploration of your path to power – through money, violence, influence or any combination thereof – that *Republic* takes shape.

#### NOT BELIEF NOR DOUBT

For me the key issue has always been how the interface would work. I first encountered both Demis and *Republic* five years ago, while the game was still in the early concept stages and all that was

**"At times *Republic: The Revolution* appears more like a sociology experiment than an actual game"**

shown were tech demos of the graphics engine and path-finding AI routines. Neither the creator or the game were short of ambition, but what had concerned me back then was how he would be able to take the boast of providing the player with total freedom to both explore this world and pursue his own goals and translate it into game mechanics.

Five years ago not even Demis could answer that. Today, as the phalanx of European journalists shambled their uncoordinated way into the Chelsea-themed conference suite, a nervous (and tired) looking Demis sitting at the presentation screen indicated that his answer was about to be revealed. But when your life for the past half-decade is about to come under public scrutiny for the first time, nerves are to be expected.

As the demo gets underway and Demis begins talking about the action-based nature of the gameplay, how character's tasks are booked into one of three daily slots, how everything from ideology to social class to time and location play a part in determining outcomes, and how the player's input through action-based mini games is key





The media can be a useful mouthpiece for your views.



The camera can be placed as near or as far as you like, with no loss of detail.



Sometimes a warm handshake and a winning smile does the trick.



As your power grows, self-protection is important.

## NEXT IN THE CITY

### GRAND THEFT AUTO: NOVISTRANA, ANYONE?

With all the initial hype about the so-called infinite polygon engine when the game was first announced several years ago, looking at how relatively underused the 3D graphics engine is within the actual game mechanics, you can't help but feel there's an opportunity being missed here. This is one of the most realistic feeling cities we've ever seen in a game, the scale of which easily knocks the likes of *GTA* or *Mafia* into a cocked hat. Demis rightly claims that within the context of *Republic*, any kind of first-person view or direct input control over characters would amount to little more than a gimmick with no real purpose.

Nonetheless, if Elixir was to simply discard its engine after this one game instead of utilising it in a more action adventure-based title, then it would be a far greater crime than any of those that your in-game avatar is capable of ordering. If you need someone to develop the story, you've got my number...



Sadly there's no *GTA*-style driving action.

to influencing results, one thing becomes abundantly clear. *Republic* is not an easy game to explain.

"I don't believe the game is fundamentally that complex," he counters during a later Q&A session. "It's really all down to presentation. We're just trying to make that as simple as possible. Most people know about all these concepts within the real world, so for us it's about getting them across in the game."

### ADVANCED MANIPULATION 101

At times *Republic* appears more like a sociology experiment than an actual game. The concepts of class play a key factor in deciding your victory and learning the best methods of controlling the proles – as Demis amusingly refers to them – will see you rise to the top faster than your computer controlled rivals.

"There are certainly more working class people in the world, but the attributes are balanced so that the upper and middle classes are equally as important in different ways," he expands. "If it was just down to numbers then every game would just be about exploring the Force ideology as quickly as possible. Using the correct actions on the correct people make it equally as easy to influence them whatever their class. A charity gala in a poorer area would have little effect as no one would care. In an upper class area it would have a much bigger impact."

Class is combined with individual ideology to create characters. Your actions in the game – chosen from a list of hundreds that include everything from

holding public demonstrations to bribing politicians, all of which are dramatically played out in real-time for you to either simply witness or play an active part in – have to be carefully decided in order to have maximum impact, to gain control of the desired citizens of Novistrana and to increase your power base.

### ONE FINAL HURDLE

While watching Demis play through his presentation, elements from all manner of games flit across the giant plasma screen tellingly. *The Sims*, *Theme Park*, *Civilisation*, *Mafia*, *GTA III*, *Sim City* – *Republic* often appears similar to all these, yet also manages to remain somehow unique and original. The classic case of something totalling far more than the sum of its parts.

But there's also a problem with it. Demis' original ambitious concept has over the last five years been naturally tempered by the realities of gameplay mechanics. As it stands *Republic* comes across as one of the most impenetrable games of recent times, a game you're either going to 'get' right from the start or not be able to comprehend at all. It's more than just GUI design, something Demis is at pains to point out is still being worked on, although that will play a large part.

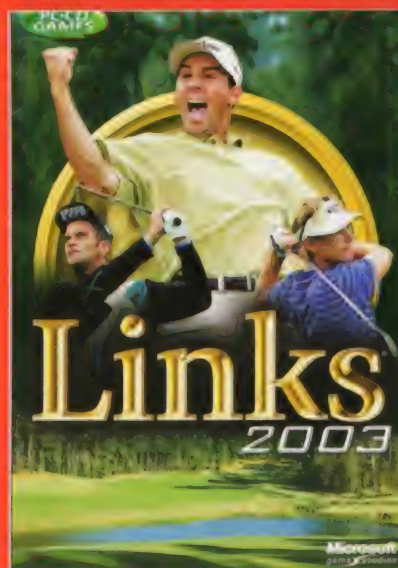
These last few months of tweaking, balancing and playtesting are going to be the most crucial stage of the development cycle. Demis and his team at Elixir have just one real task left to complete: turn one of the most original, compelling, intelligent and playable concepts of the past few years into a game real-world proles can understand. [E]



# VIRGIN LOVES



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Gold Edition



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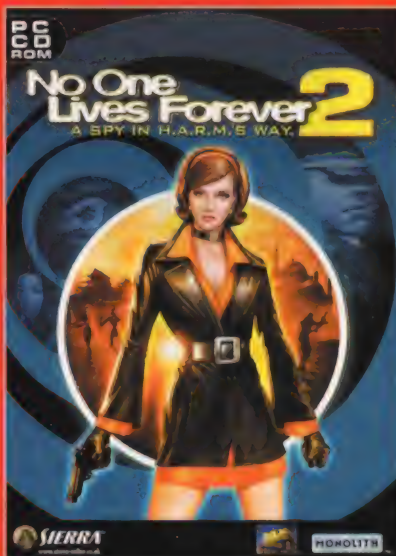
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# REVIEWS

## LIFE STARTS AT 50



SENIOR REVIEWS ED Martin Korda

This issue is somewhat of a landmark for me. It was 50 issues ago that I first showed up at PC ZONE as a green and overly keen university graduate, desperate to make an impression during a week of work experience.

The full-time team back then consisted of Chris Anderson (editor), Richie Shoemaker (news editor) and Mark Hill (section editor). Woods, Sefton, Holden and Pratchett were nowhere to be seen. The cover was *System Shock 2*. *Ultima Online* was reviewed head-to-head with *EverQuest* (by Chris), and my first duty – apart from making the ed 343 cups of coffee – was to write a 300 word review on *PGA Championship Golf*.

Little did I know back then that two score and ten issues later I'd be privileged enough to travel to Seattle to see the biggest game in PC history and write a 6,000 word preview on it (page 38) – a game which is re-writing the rulebook.

But enough about the past, what about the here and now? This month, we've got a mixture of the sublime, the solid and the stolid. Fitting perfectly into the first category, and surprising many of us with its depth and quality, is *Rise Of Nations* (page 70). I haven't seen Keith this hooked since he picked up a nasty injury during a scuffle with the pirate captain from the Broadway production of *Oooh Arrrr, Me Hearties*.

Richie has been outwitting Nazis with his strategic brilliance in the visually unspectacular but highly entertaining *Blitzkrieg* (page 78), while Mark has been left seriously disappointed both by the latest *Indy* game (page 76) and *Devastation* (page 84), an FPS that promised so much but delivers so little. And in a vague tie-in to my first issue, Chris casts his critical eye over the solid *Ultima Online* expansion pack, *Age Of Shadows* on page 82. Now there's a coincidence.



Arriving without fanfare or hype, will this epic RTS of conquest and expansion set the world alight? Find out on page 70.

## THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

## OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets

reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make then please email your views to [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk) and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

## ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

## OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our top-end rig, the Area-51 from Alienware.

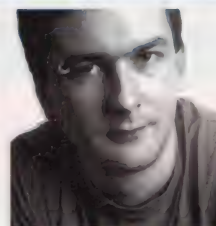


Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

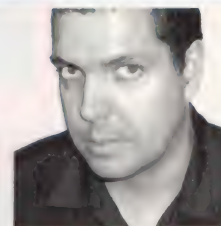
## MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

What are you currently playing?

Real football in the park.



JAMIE SEFTON

What's your first memory of working at PC ZONE?

Sitting drunk on the editor's knee.

*Age Of Mythology* and *Unreal II*.  
A bizarre initiation ceremony where everyone wore masks of human flesh.





70

**RISE OF NATIONS**  
Conquer the world



90

**RE-RELEASES**  
Older games get another run out



93

**FEEDBACK**  
Where you air your opinions



94

**SUPERTEST**  
Battle of the stealth games

## DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

- 70 **RISE OF NATIONS**
- 6 **INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB**
- 8 **BLITZKRIEG**
- 2 **ULTIMA ONLINE: AGE OF SHADOWS**
- 3 **TROPICO 2: PIRATE COVE**
- 4 **DEVASTATION**
- 8 **STRIKE FIGHTERS: PROJECT 1**
- 9 **GLOBAL POWER**
- 9 **RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC**
- 0 **RE-RELEASES**

INCLUDING ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2: GOLD, SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II GOLD, SERIOUS SAM GOLD, EMPIRE EARTH GOLD AND MANY MORE.

### 2 UPDATES

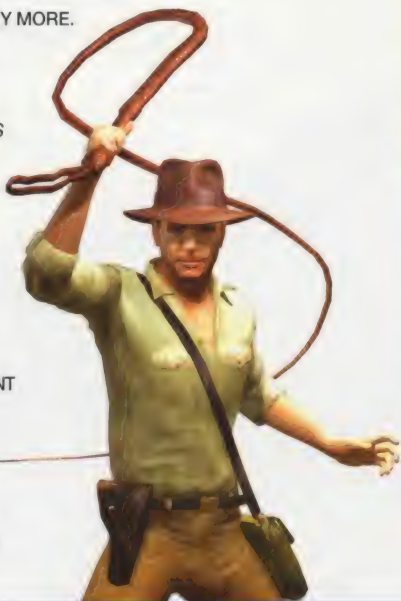
MULTIPLAYER UPDATE  
REVIEW OF NO ONE LIVES  
FOREVER 2

### 3 FEEDBACK

YOUR VIEWS, REVIEWS  
AND OPINIONS ON THE  
LATEST GAMES

### 4 SUPERTEST

THE LAST IN THE CURRENT  
SERIES OF SUPERTEST  
SEES A BATTLE OF THE  
STEALTH GAMES. IT  
WAS CLOSE, BUT WHO  
SNUCK IN FOR THE WIN?



76



78



83



**MARTIN KORDA**

Warrior Kings: Battles.



**ANTHONY HOLDEN**

Nothing. I've been Downunder (Downunder what? - ed).



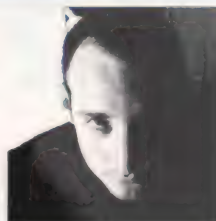
**RHIANNA PRATCHETT**

Age Of Mythology and Tropico 2  
Finding out I was flying out to Dallas in my first week.



**MARK HILL**

Championship Manager 4



**KEITH PULLIN**

Rise Of Nations.  
Watching downloaded South Park episodes with the then news ed, Paul Mallinson.



**CHRIS ANDERSON**

EverQuest.  
Meeting the then editor Paul Lakin and being impressed with how normal he was.

The shittiest office I'd ever seen, pale faces and a blanket of smoke.

A hung-over Dave Woods being a prick when I approached him for work. Nothing's changed.

The smell of old tobacco.

Watching downloaded South Park episodes with the then news ed, Paul Mallinson.

Meeting the then editor Paul Lakin and being impressed with how normal he was.



# RISE OF NATIONS

■ £29.99 | Pub: Microsoft | Dev: Big Huge Games | ETA: April 22 | [www.bighugegames.com/riseofnations](http://www.bighugegames.com/riseofnations)

**REQUIRE** PIII 800Mhz, 256Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.4Ghz, 256 Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

**If you're going to start a war, then do it from the safety of your PC. Keith Pullin did just that – and now he rules the world**



**WHEN WAS** the last time you played an RTS and thought, "Yes, this is different, this is new"? At a guess, it's probably been a while. OK, C&C: *Generals* is good, but it's still nothing spectacular – the same old chassis with a few external modifications. 3D engines may look good, but they're also guilty of putting gameplay ideas on hold. In some cases they even hinder it – just look at *Highland Warriors*.

The last truly evolutionary RTS has to be *Total War*. Aside from the ridiculously large 3D armies (even if controlling 8,000 pixels on the horizon is still not everybody's cup of tea), it boasts an inner tactical depth that goes beyond mere 'rush' tactics and allows the player to consider the global situation away

from the battlefield. It is without question the most accomplished and thoughtful RTS on the market. Until now.

## CIVILISATIONS IN DISGUISE

What we have in *Rise Of Nations* is innovation, imagination and the creative impetus of designers who have basically said, "Right, we're turning *Civilization III* into a RTS game."

If you read last month's preview, you'll be familiar with this quirky idea by now. Still, we'd better apologise, because this is something we will come back to time and time again over the course of the next six pages. The inescapable fact is *RoN* really is a real-time version of *Civilization III* – this is an RTS that plays by turn-based rules.

But *Civ* is not *RoN*'s only source of inspiration.

Visually, it's the absolute spitting image of *Age Of Empires*. The first time you emerge onto the main isometric play area, you will be convinced that the pale-faced apprentice who works down at your local game shop has swapped CDs and given you Ensemble's erstwhile RTS classic by mistake.

Sadly, these days *AoE* is hardly a glittering showcase of cutting-edge visuals. Consequently, *RoN*'s graphics do the job and nothing more. Frills such as birds circling the battlefield as well as decent unit animation breathe a little life into the static landscapes. And you have to admire the way each culture in the game has a different graphical style, and in many cases completely unique units too. But overall, there's none of the beauty of C&C: *Generals*' lush 3D world.

Yet it matters not. Big Huge Games has taken the sensible if not fashionable view that gameplay

comes before looks. Besides, show us a strategy game that's become a classic purely because it's pleasing on the eye. Great gameplay comes first. Graphics are, and always will remain, secondary in this genre.

## BORDERLINE

One of the main reasons *RoN* has gamplay in abundance is down to its concept of national borders. This real-time, shifting coloured line across the battlefield indicates the limit of your territory. Yet, it also represents so much more. By watching your border edge forward or slip backward, you can gauge exactly how powerful your nation is compared with your neighbour.

One of the most obvious ways to increase the size of your territory is to found new cities. In fact, success in *RoN* lies in your ability to spread out as quickly as possible from your capital city in a manner similar to a turn-based game we may have already mentioned. But like *Civ*, you can't just wander about setting up cities here, there and everywhere.

## INPERSPECTIVE

### MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

Reviewed Issue 120, Score 90%

*Total War* is *RoN*'s closest rival, and its only edge is with the visuals and a more manageable economy. If Big Huge Games delivers a finely tuned sequel, you could be looking at the next big thing.

### CIVILIZATION III

Reviewed Issue 111, Score: 86%

*RoN* is the RTS equivalent of *Civ III*, so it would be hard not to compare the two. Overall though, because of its immediacy, its action-packed feel, and its vastly more interesting nature game, *RoN* is easily the more enjoyable game.



Your army has no appreciation of the finer things in life – like the wonders of the world. Just look at the movie they are making around the Kremlin.



Firstly, there's location to consider. Is it near a good source of metal and wood? Is the land fertile enough to farm? Is it easily defensible? You also need to have enough food and wood available to actually start building. But most important of all, you need to make sure you have researched civic technology at your library. Each level you advance up the civic tech tree allows you to build one more settlement. There are seven levels in total, so while you can only build seven cities per map (which is more than enough – believe us) there is of course the added option of capturing enemy cities to increase your numbers, and ultimately your overall national strength.

Technology is crucial in *RoN*. As well as civic technology, you need to research military, commerce and science. As a general rule the nation that wins a battle tends to be the nation that's completed its research tree first. The knock-on effect of this is that you can often become bogged down in managing your economy in order to gather enough resources to research your tech, when all you really want to do is raise an army and, well, raze.

**“As a general rule, the nation that wins the battle is the one that climbs its tech tree first”**





Thankfully, the single-player skirmish mode provides a variety of options aimed at minimising this problem. There's even a turbo resource-gathering mode that means you can literally forget about your economy and concentrate on destroying the planet instead.

It may also be worth noting that due to the immense amount of upgrades available, it's very easy to forget where to find the upgrade you want. This problem is compounded by the fact that sometimes an upgrade seems to be completely misplaced. Why,

for example, is the upgrade to increase your ships' speed found in a granary? Call us picky, but maybe that kind of technology is more suited to the docks building.

#### THE WONDER OF TECHNOLOGY

Other ways to push your borders forward include constructing things like universities (which also increase the knowledge of your nation), temples, farms, fortresses and markets.

Markets are particularly useful as they allow you to build



Bitter disputes often rage around areas of rare resources.



Victory in a battle brings extra resources, armies, bonus cards and a bloody great, well-earned smile.

## CHANGING THE FACE OF RTS

### DON'T SUFFER CULTURE SHOCK. FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH DIFFERENT NATIONS' ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN RISE OF NATIONS

Although graphically *RoN* leaves a lot to be desired, it still has some strong points. The most notable of these is its ability to convey cultural differences through graphical style. The four capital cities here have reached the Information Age and boast fairly impressive glass and steel architecture. However, if you look closely you can see there are distinct differences.



**CAPITAL PARIS**  
**NATION FRANCE**

A hint of the old Parisian charm remains in one small quarter of the city. The rest is pure French class glistening in the sunlight.



**CAPITAL BEIJING**  
**NATION CHINA**

The familiar oriental charm resides in the lower sections of the city and even the skyscrapers boast pagoda-style roofs.



**CAPITAL TENOCHTITLAN**  
**NATION AZTEC**

Though modern by any standard, there's still a hint of the stepped pyramid design so favoured by the Aztecs.



**CAPITAL THEBES**  
**NATION EGYPT**

The Egyptians have no limits when it comes to impressing their rulers with their impeccably ostentatious design.

caravans that link your cities and increase your income through trade. They also produce merchants who ride out on their faithful mules to set up shop next to various luxury resources dotted around the map, such as lemon trees, gems, horses, rubber, uranium and oil. These luxury resources differ from the

five basic resources of wood, metal, food, money and knowledge, mainly because they only become visible when you have reached a certain technology level. Oil, for example, can only be collected once your nation has reached the Modern Age. Your nation will have no real use for it before

then anyway. With no tanks to run, ships to sail or planes to fly, what use would you have for it anyway? Another perfect example of how *RoN* manages to take an idea from the turn-based *Civ III* and convert it seamlessly into an RTS.

Adding other essential constructions like barracks,

## WALKTHROUGH →

### TODAY SOUTH AMERICA, TOMORROW THE WORLD

The best way to see the world is to conquer it. Here's how to get started in the campaign mode...



**1** Starting the game as the Maya, the first thing we need to do is remember to play to our strengths. In this case the greatest Mayan advantage is the power of architecture. We must build our way to glory.



**2** The first strategic decision is upon us. Taking the barbarians' supply depot in the east will give us a second army. So we'll leave the Aztecs in the northwest for now – after all, they may prove useful allies.



**3** Fighting barbarians tends to be a lot simpler than battling civilised nations. Their towns consist of little more than barracks. A well-drilled army will dispose of their pitiful hovels in no time at all.



**4** OK, now we've got two territories and two armies. But the Incas to the south have blocked us off. So we'll take the territory to the east as there's another supply depot there, and it controls the trade route to Africa.



**5** The Incas can call for reinforcements in this battle, so we'll counter that by playing a couple of bonus cards. With any luck our extra resources and technology should win the day.





Where would the German army be without its trusty flame-throwers?



The Spanish Armada disguises itself as a fleet of single beds.

**“Wonders play a role in the strength of your nation. Knock out a quick Palais de Versailles or Taj Mahal and foes will recoil in awe”**



**6** And so the real battle begins. We already have a military advantage after playing our bonus cards. If we play to our strengths and build other cities quickly, then victory will surely be ours!

stables and war factories to increase your military presence is yet another way of expanding your borders. And Wonders too play a significant role in defining the relative strength of your nation. Knock out a quick Palais de Versailles or Taj Mahal and watch as friends and foes alike recoil in awe.

Borders effectively add a whole new dimension to RTSs that simply hasn't been considered before. But some will no doubt argue it's merely a gimmick to make the map look more interesting. In fairness, if you analyse actual battle mechanics there isn't a huge difference between *RoN* and its peers. The same tried and tested

RTS theories apply – elevation is critical; don't use archers against heavy infantry; establish defence before offence – it's all the usual stuff. And yet if you take away the borders, there's no doubt the game would change significantly. Attrition damage and major game options associated with this attribute would disappear, and many of the technology upgrades would be useless too.

There's no doubt the advantages of seeing your borders drawn on the map are easy to appreciate. With them, you can instantly see how your actions are affecting the overall strength of your nation. If a border is gradually falling

## WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

**THE WORLD IS A BETTER PLACE WITH WONDERS, AND HERE'S THE REASON WHY.**

*RoN* boasts 14 Wonders, including such exotic delights as the Terra Cotta Army, Porcelain Tower, Angkor Wat, Coliseum, Taj Mahal and, of course, our old favourite the Pyramids. Wonders provide your nation with numerous benefits that range from automatically creating military units every 30 seconds, to vastly increasing the knowledge of your nation. Generally, any Wonder you build will enhance one or more aspects of your economy or military in a major way.

More crucially, you can actually achieve a Wonder victory if you build enough of them. Basically, each time you build a Wonder you receive 'wonder points'. If another nation builds a Wonder you lose some points. So, as the game progresses wonder points can swing one way and then the other. Ultimately, if one nation reaches a set number of points they will win the game regardless of their military or economic situation.



The Terra Cotta Army generates military units.



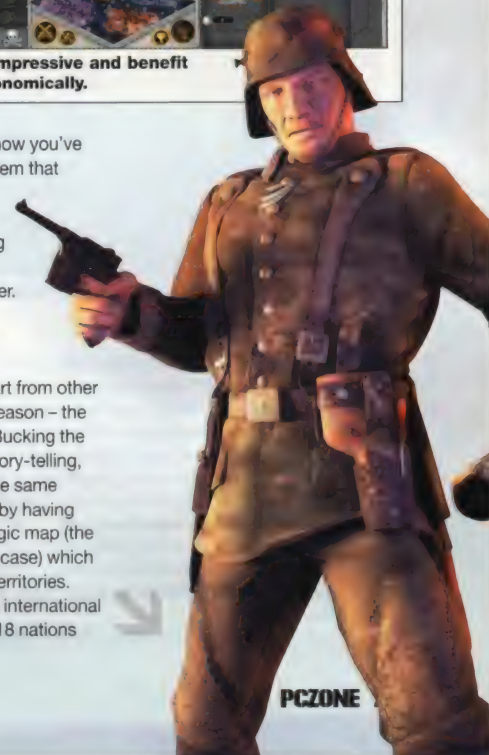
Wonders look impressive and benefit your nation economically.

backwards, you know you've got a serious problem that needs to be dealt with. If a border is constant or moving forward you know you're onto a winner.

## NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

*RoN* sets itself apart from other RTSs for another reason – the campaign mode. Bucking the current trend for story-telling, *RoN* goes down the same route as *Total War* by having an overview strategic map (the entire world in this case) which is divided up into territories.

Placed into this international theatre of war are 18 nations





including Britain, France, Spain, Germany, China, Egypt and Russia, to name but a few. You can choose to battle it out for complete global supremacy as any one of these at the start of the campaign.

Each territory on the map contains prizes such as resources, cash tributes, wonders and supply depots offering extra armies. And the AI-controlled nations are more than aware of the strategic advantages of these features. Some home in on resources, others rush to simply gain as much territory as possible, while others head straight for the supply depots.

AI for all 18 nations is wonderfully varied and well balanced. You can expect the same kind of tactical variation when you get down onto the actual battlefield too. Germans in particular are extremely

defensive and take a lot of breaking down. Aztecs meanwhile are overtly aggressive yet leave gaping holes in their lines that can be gleefully exploited by the resourceful aggressor. The only part of the AI that is even slightly dubious is the occasional tendency for units to struggle finding a way across water. Pathfinding eh? As always we're at its schizophrenic mercy.

Decisions are not just governed by what territory to take though. Buying, or indeed capturing, bonus cards is something that proves just as important. These handy little trump cards can be played before a battle and can benefit you in several ways. Some cards allow you to collect battlefield resources faster (like food, wood and metal). Others completely disable an opposing nation's special power for the duration



A long-held German ambition is achieved as Britain falls.



It takes a couple of minutes before captured cities can be assimilated into your culture.

## MISSED OPPORTUNITY



The script editor lets you write your own text...



...for the missions you create in the scenario editor.

### NO BEDTIME STORY?

There will of course be those who rue the lack of a story-based campaign, but it's not all bad news on this front. *RoN* ships with a scenario and script editor, so if you really want a linear, plot-driven campaign you can bet that dozens of home-made challenges will be springing up on the Internet within a couple of weeks of the game's release. More to the point, the door has been left wide open for developer BHG itself to provide that kind of entertainment in a future expansion pack.

But for now, as far as we're concerned it actually makes a pleasant change to have an RTS that doesn't force some hastily contrived plot upon you. Which means for once we don't have to moan about it either.

of a battle. If you were fighting the Spanish, for example, you could play a card to eliminate their ability to see the entire map from the start. And propaganda cards are especially welcome, seeing as it's something we've all become so accustomed to recently.

In total there are 20 cards available, and it's pretty amazing how often you find yourself relying on them, and not just your traditional RTS, skills to gain the upper hand.

### CAN'T BUY ME LOVE?

Managing your campaign is reminiscent of those maps of Iraq we keep seeing on television. Arrows indicate where reinforcements can move in from, and you can see at a glance exactly in which territories your armies are positioned. However, unlike

the war in Iraq, *RoN* provides you with a chance to buy territories using an ancient art called 'diplomacy'. It's very effective, it averts bloodshed and we highly recommend it.

The amazing variety of strategies on offer makes

and it adds up to a non-linear RTS experience you can play over and over again.

### ON YOUR OWN

If the world domination campaign doesn't tickle your fancy then panic not. As

**"Buy territories using the ancient art of 'diplomacy'. We highly recommend it"**

*RoN* a truly unique gaming experience. You can actually find yourself pondering for what seems like hours over your next move. Invade France? Form a treaty with China (after all they keep those feisty Japanese at bay)? Push on into Africa and capture the Pyramids? The options are endless,

mentioned earlier, you can participate in one-off battles against up to seven other nations. These skirmish battles have so many configurable settings you could play a hundred games and face a different challenge each time. 'No Rush', 'Diplomacy', 'Assassin', 'Barbarians at the Gates', 'Peaceful Tech Race' -

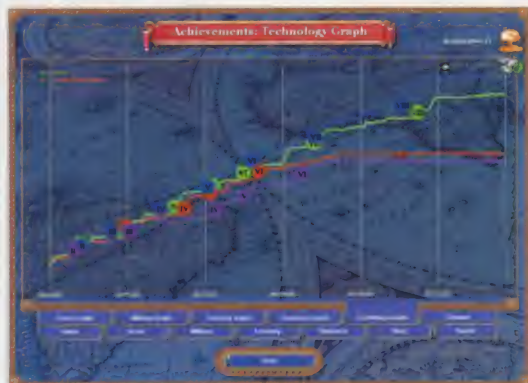


## CHART TOPPER

LINE GOES UP, LINE GOES DOWN. LINE GOES UP, LINE GOES DOWN. HELP ME, PLEASE...

Like most games published by Microsoft, *RoN* seems to contain incredible amounts of post-battle statistics. OK, sometimes it's kind of interesting to look over the critical points of the conflict by analysing charts and graphs, but is it really necessary to count how many times the mouse was clicked, or how many times a hotkey was pressed?

Why exactly would you want to know this information? Is it used as a kind of tie-break decider in the multiplayer game? No – it's there because the programmers are showing off. Well, just stop it please, there are more stats here than in a game of *Championship Manager*, and it's giving us a headache.



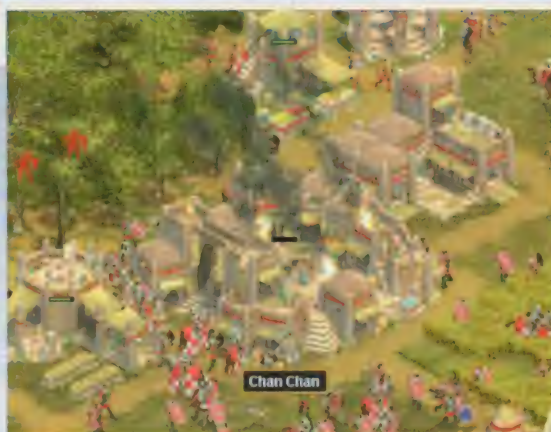
What this tells us is that blue won.

the variations on the tried and tested RTS theme are immense.

You can even adjust the starting age. So if you want to fight in the Information Age with tanks, battleships and nukes as

opposed to the swords, carracks and catapults of the Classical Age, you can. It's up to you

whether you want to fight in 1BC, 2000AD, somewhere in between, or battle your way



The Spanish advance upon an Aztec stronghold.

through all seven historical ages in a gruelling war spanning two entire millennia.

Further increasing the challenge are six difficulty settings. The easiest allows you to smother your foes like a wrestler pinning down a small kitten. Yet, at the other end of the scale you struggle to chop a tree down without your wily foes mysteriously appearing from nowhere to slaughter your hapless lumberjacks. Rounding off the one-off battle mode is a selection of around 16 maps. Granted, this is not a huge amount, but it's more than enough when combined with the other customisations on offer.

Again, like the campaign mode, *RoN*'s ability to conjure up so many options and provide the player with so many ways to

play the game is extraordinary. What's more, you'll be pleased to know that all the above options can be implemented in the multiplayer game.

## FRESH PRINCE

So, *Rise Of Nations* is here, and with it comes a foil-wrapped freshness and unique perspective that we have never seen before; revolutionary national borders, a world domination campaign, 18 different playable cultures, 32 luxury resources and crucially, that all-important gameplay.

Graphically, there is certainly room for improvement, and doubtless a full 3D assault on the likes of *AoM*, *Generals* and *Total War* is the next step forward.

Sticky moments in economy management and the occasional



## SECOND OPINION

PAUL PRESLEY

Why does every empire-building title have to look like *Age Of Empires*? Sure, *Rise Of Nations* explores civilisations in a way far beyond the historical and/or mythological aspects of Microsoft's other RTS series, but did it have to look the same? Is this part of some larger-scale corporate branding exercise that will start afflicting every future Microsoft game?

Probably not, but it doesn't excuse *RoN*'s (best acronym, ever) laziness on this front. Nor does it excuse everyone else's. It's 2003 for goodness sake. Where are all the swishy 3D swooping engines and innovative interface designs? However, *RoN* is a fine old game, sure enough, and I agree with Keith on pretty much all of his points, and if you can look past the dodgy graphics, you'll find a sublime game underneath. The 'Risk' sections add a sense of greater longevity to the proceedings, hooking you for weeks on end, but it really needs more of its own sense of identity to have avoided feeling like an *Age Of Empires* mod.

pathfinding mishap are further shortcomings, and ultimately it means *RoN* equals but doesn't better *Total War*. But these are minor flaws, and we're not taking anything away from what BHG has achieved with, and let's not forget this, its very first release.

If you're looking for an endlessly entertaining, bold new direction in strategy gaming then look no further than *Rise Of Nations*. Quite simply, it's one of the most satisfying and addictive RTS games ever crafted. [A+]



A tank division comes under intense aerial bombardment.



Later in the game, anti-aircraft weapons are crucial.



Cavalry, infantry and artillery mass ready for the assault.



A whale comes to inspect the massing Egyptian navy.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Visual national borders
- ✓ Enthralling world campaign
- ✓ Original use of resources
- ✓ Eighteen significantly different cultures
- ✗ Graphically weak
- ✗ Economy management heavy in places
- ✗ Some pathfinding issues

90

One of the most original and playable RTSs ever





Spitting image of Harrison, don't you think? No, neither do we. Lift your head up so I can hit you, will you?

# INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

■ £34.99 | Pub: Activision/LucasArts | Dev: The Collective | ETA: Out Now | [www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com)

**REQUIRES** PIII 733, 128Mb RAM and 32Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 1.2 GHz, 256Mb RAM and 64Mb 3D card

**Mark Hill** sees another childhood hero turned into a money-spinning travesty

**IT'S A SAD** fact, but many game are shit. While a tiny fraction of the game development community is determined to prove that dizzying advances in technology multiply the possibilities of depth, quality and storytelling, it seems the rest of the world is content to recycle, regurgitate and release titles that display an alarming lack of imagination. It's not their fault

really. I blame the marketing departments and the directors who listen to them. It seems most games are born in the same kind of meetings that produce things like *Fame Academy* and orange-flavoured Kit Kats.

## FALLING VALUE

The latest *Indy* adventure – and I use the term in its widest, most devalued sense – is a perfect example of how games are devolving. In 1989 the brilliant point 'n' click was released, followed in 1992 by the even better *Fate Of Atlantis*. They had clever puzzles, bags of charm and captured the spirit of the films perfectly. Seven years later *The Infernal Machine* tried to emulate the success of *Tomb*

*Raider* while still acknowledging that Indy is an intelligent archaeology professor who can deal with puzzles as much as

physical obstacles. Fast forward to 2003 (or should that be backwards?) and we're presented with an experience so empty, banal and simplistic you can only sink your head into your hands in despair.

but this is also true of cinema, television, music and even books. What really gets me about *The Emperor's Tomb* is the half-arsed way it's been put together.

In a way, a review seems superfluous. You can get all the

**"So what if the actor sounds nothing like Ford and his lines are rubbish?"**

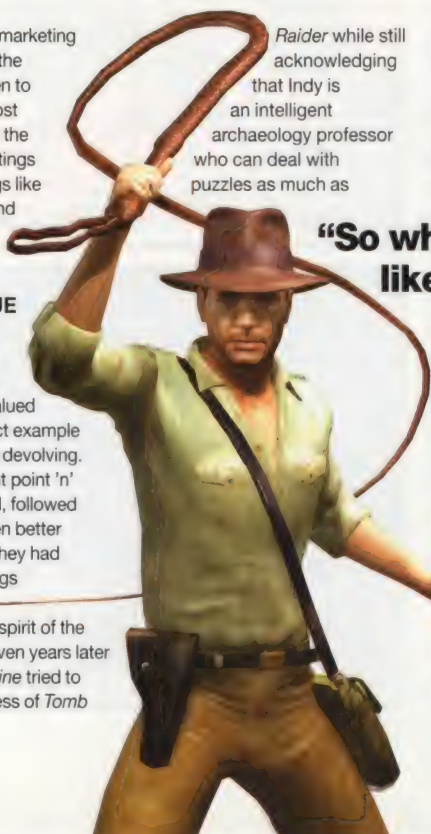
## ALL IN THE TITLE

At this rate we'll be playing the gaming equivalent of the primordial soup pretty soon, with specially designed controller pads that won't require the use of opposable thumbs and gameplay targeting solely the deepest, reptilian parts of your brain.

It's easy to blame it all on consoles, but also short-sighted. It's true that the main problem is publishers want to appeal to the lowest common denominator,

information you need from the title. They so desperately wanted to put across that this is *Indy* doing a *Lara Croft*, that they included the word "tomb". On the one hand, their condescension and belief in our utter stupidity should have us up in arms. On the other, you have to admire their cojones at dispensing with all subtlety and admitting straight up that they're trying to rip you off.

*The Emperor's Tomb* is a firm believer that by playing the instantly recognisable and



## INPERSPECTIVE

### INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

Reviewed Issue 84, Score 88%

By no means a brilliant game, but at least it wasn't made with complete simpletons in mind. Better control system, less platform hopping and more proper puzzles.

### TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

Reviewed Issue 98, Score 72%

Her last title showcased everything that was wrong with the series. Let's just hope they get it right with *Angel Of Darkness*.





The engine is the same one used in the *Buffy* Xbox game.

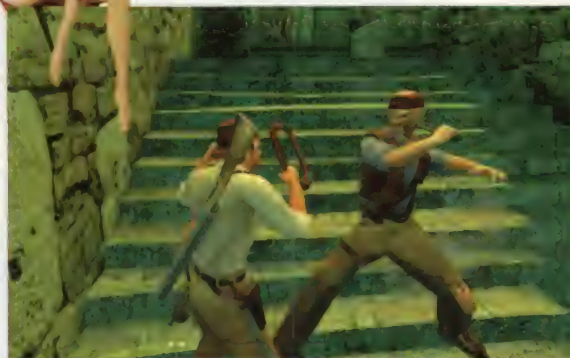
I'd love to see the size of the plug at the end of this chain.



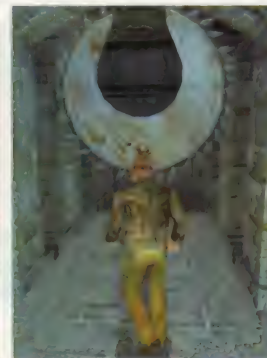
"Going somewhere lads?"



Something has got to give.



The control interface is terrible.



We've seen it all before.

## INDY, WHERE FOUR ART THOU?

### FORGET THE MEDIOCRE GAMES, WHEN IS THE NEXT FILM OUT?

When we reviewed *The Infernal Machine* nearly four years ago, we included some of the speculation going on at the time about a fourth *Indy* movie, and still nothing has happened. The rumours have become much more concrete though, and Spielberg, Lucas and Ford have at least admitted it will exist. There are reports that shooting could even start this year. The problem has been getting a script everyone is happy with, with various rewrites occurring over the years. At the moment, the man working on it is Frank Darabont (screenwriter and director of *The Shawshank Redemption*), which should at least reassure us we won't have some kind of *Episode I* fiasco on our hands. The action will take place in the 1950s, reflecting the fact that Harrison Ford is 60 now and unlikely to have the energy to run away from giant balls. Of course, this means the Nazis won't be around, and there's unconfirmed talks of the story taking place in China. Sean Connery is set to return for a few scenes as Indy's dad. Don't get too excited though, because the initial release date is pencilled as July 1, 2005. Thankfully, there are also rumours that the first three films will be released on DVD later this year. About bloody time too.



Expectations are high for the next *Indy* film.

uplifting theme tune every few minutes it doesn't really need to do much else to put you in Harrison Ford's shoes. So what if every level consists of hopping from one ledge to another, pushing a lever and beating up a few Nazis? So what if the actor sounds nothing like Ford and his lines are rubbish? So what if poor design has you grinding your molars with frustration every step of the way? All you need is a few notes of the John Williams score and you're sorted. We've seen the same uninspired thinking with some *James Bond* and *Star Wars* games, leading me to think you might as well buy the soundtracks to any of these, stick them on your hi-fi and somersault over your sofa for a more effective use of the licences.

### A FEDORA NIGHTMARE

I mentioned frustration just now, and not without reason. It's not a particularly hard game, but it does have an awful control

system. And when you're spending so much time delicately judging jumps, it's a fatal flaw. At first I was delighted to see mouse support and a default WASD keyboard layout. But, in a stroke of complete idiocy, the mouse is used only to move the camera not Indy himself, and pressing down for example will make him run towards the camera rather than walk backwards. It's so unintuitive and annoying I tried playing with a pad for a while, but the complete lack of camera control made that even worse. There is no way of saving (except by completing a level), so if you fall to your death you have to start again. At least most levels are mercifully (even ridiculously) short.

The combat looks good but isn't particularly enjoyable to execute. It's all part of the misplaced simplicity, which includes symbols telling you what to do whenever you come across an object you

can interact with. Well, how would you know to push a lever if you didn't get an icon in the top right corner? One can only assume this was a rush job, an attempt to get to the shelves before the next *Lara*. It's the only way to explain how The Collective (responsible for a solid *DS9* title and *Buffy* on the Xbox) could do no better with such a great licence. [C]

### PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ The music
- ✓ Decent engine
- ✓ It's *Indy*!
- ✗ Awful control system
- ✗ No depth
- ✗ Frustrating and annoying

# 63

Come back *Lara*, all is forgiven





# BLITZKRIEG

## IN PERSPECTIVE

### SUDDEN STRIKE II

**Reviewed Issue 120, Score 72%**  
Russian developer Fireglow took the easy route and decided to add more of the same for their WWII RTS sequel, which ensured the headache-inducing logistics of the first game were even more painful. A worthwhile and enjoyably epic game if you put the time in, but after playing *Blitzkrieg* it isn't one you'd want to go back to.

### COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

**Reviewed Issue 108, Score 90%**  
If full frontal assaults are getting you down, try tackling the Germans from behind in this stealthy strategy game. Along with *Medal Of Honor* this is the best WWII game in circulation and also one of the most difficult and frustrating games full stop. Available for less than a fiver, it's a worthwhile purchase if you can't wait for the sequel, which was, incidentally, giftedly previewed last issue.



Here's what the game looks like in 640x480 resolution.



■ £34.99 | Pub: CDV | Dev: Nival Interactive | ETA: April 25 |  
[www.cdv-blitzkrieg.de](http://www.cdv-blitzkrieg.de)

**REQUIRES** PIII 366, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM and a 64Mb 3D card

**It looks like *Sudden Strike*, it plays like *Sudden Strike*, it even smells like *Sudden Strike*. Only it isn't, not officially anyway. *Richie Shoemaker* tries to explain**

**BEING A FAN** of real-time strategy games, WWII history in general and thereby rather naturally the *Sudden Strike* RTS series, my first squint at *Blitzkrieg* made me a little anxious not to mention a teensy bit angry. It appeared to me after playing an early version of the game late last year that *Blitzkrieg* was little more than a thinly veiled attempt to right the wrongs of what was a disappointing *Sudden Strike II*. After all, not only were both games from the same publisher, fashioned in Russia and concerned with commanding and conquering hundreds of tanks, infantry and aircraft across seemingly arbitrary World War II battlefields, but, more pertinently, since 'sudden strike' is very much a literal translation from the German



Unfortunately wrecks don't stay on the battlefield for long.

and the way in which you progress through them couldn't be more different.

For the single-player portion *Blitzkrieg* offers up three very different campaigns that

Dunkirk France. The campaign then turns to North Africa as a few US units are introduced, then to the invasion of Italy and back into France for the final push into Germany. The

## "What it lacks in surprises, it makes up for by introducing new and upgraded units"

'blitzkrieg', both games shared the same title. Had you bought *Sudden Strike II* when it was released just a couple of months ago, you might justifiably feel a little peeved that already its publisher is requesting you shell out another £35 to play the game *Sudden Strike II* should have been all along. I know I would.

### HAVING A SHERMAN

Aside from a name and a love for WWII arcade-style strategy, *Blitzkrieg* plunders still more from its stable-mate; eschewing the dynamics of base building, research and unit mass-production, with the focus instead on managing the forces you are handed at the beginning of each mission. From the famous Sherman tanks to the obscure Polish 7PT, there are more than 200 authentically cloned units to play around with, most of which are variants or upgrades that will be indistinguishable to anyone but WWII buffs.

That however is where the many similarities end, for while the style and setting of both games are entirely similar, the visuals, the focus of the battles

encompass every major front of wartime Europe. Playing as the Allies for instance, you begin the game in command of the British Expeditionary forces as they half-heartedly romp across Norway and pre-

German campaign is similarly varied, the Russian missions marginally less so, but what the game lacks in surprises, it makes up for by introducing new or upgraded units for you to play with.

## OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR

### THINGS ARE LOOKING GOOD ON THE FRONT

*Blitzkrieg's* 3D vehicles are both detailed and realistically animated: turrets follow their quarry and on firing the whole vehicle will recoil. Even stationary field guns will range in to distant enemy positions and rock the ground as they pummel the distant enemy. In the air too you'll see fighters gracefully flitting through the sky, while dive-bombers peel away to strafe advancing armour. Though graphically less spectacular than last month's *C&C: Generals*, the various vehicles, soldiers and aircraft are no less convincing.



You can't beat a few well-placed mines.





Supply trucks can dig trenches for your infantry.

**"The more random missions you tackle, the greater variety of units you can use to upgrade 'core' units"**

## MISSED OPPORTUNITY



A skirmish mode hasn't been included.

### RANDOM FACTOR

Just as it is right and proper to expect four wheels, an engine and a glovebox as part of your new car, so too should you be able to look forward to road testing your new strategy game's skirmish option. Unfortunately *Blitzkrieg* doesn't come with one. Instead what you get over and above the three single-player campaigns are 'Custom Games', which as in *Sudden Strike*, are a group of standalone missions which the developers couldn't find a place for in the main campaigns. Here you get the same three missions that were released in the demo, which is rather disappointing to say the least. Of course with the tools available for us to create our own, the hope is that new missions will be appearing on the Net soon.

However, rather than automatically hand you bigger and better weapons and machinery, the game requires you to fight for them. Each campaign is split into several Chapters, which in turn are comprised of up to four 'random' missions, at least one of which must be completed before you can tackle the final historical mission that ends the chapter. The more random missions you tackle, the greater the variety of units you can use to upgrade your 'core' units. So, for example, if you need to replace your aging anti-tank guns, you must fight the mission that will open up that type of unit.

### THE REAL DEAL

It may not perhaps have been the way the Royal Logistical Corps operated, but this drip-feed method of dishing out new units, together with a core group of units that are able to gain valuable experience, lends the game a sense of progression that WWII strategy games, the *Sudden Strike* series especially, have often lacked.

Though *Blitzkrieg* is being touted as a realistic game, such

## LAN OF HOPE AND GLORY

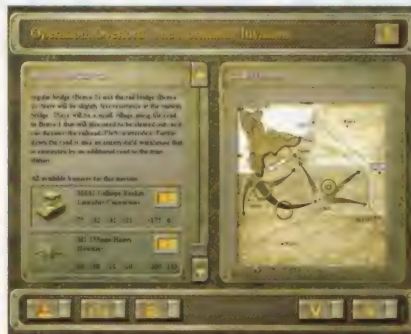
### TIME TO SERVED UP SOME PUNISHMENT

Since no online servers were up and running, we had to indulge our multiplayer curiosity by playing *Blitzkrieg*'s two multiplayer modes over the office LAN. Capture The Flag and Assault, both of which are fundamentally identical and require you to capture and hold a number of control points on the map. The more points or flags you have secured, the more reinforcements you'll receive.

CTF games are more immediate, as each side rushes to engage the enemy. Assault games on the other hand are more considered, with one side quietly waiting and preparing traps and defences, while the attackers probe for the decisive attack that will win the day. Despite there being only a handful of maps available, *Blitzkrieg* can feasibly handle up to 16 players. Rest assured we'll be putting the game through its paces online in a future issue.



The promised online modes worked well over the office LAN.



Each mission and unit is loaded with info.

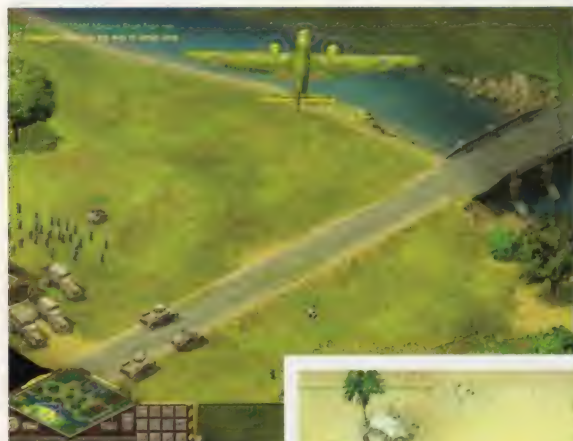


A Jagdpanther can do some serious damage.



Unless you've neutralised the enemy AA positions, sending in paratroopers would be a bit silly.





The 3D landscape offers views of gentle hills dipping into rolling fields.



As well as German, British, Soviet and US units, the game includes Italian, Polish, French and Finnish armies.

details as accurate armour ratios and shell penetration are not so apparent early on – partly because there wasn't much to choose between the various tanks of the combatant nations at the outbreak of WWII. However, in the later levels, when the German Tigers, Panthers and Jagdpanzers are thrown into battle, you realise how important it is to outflank, outrun and outnumber the enemy when their equipment is vastly superior to your own.

Despite the nod towards realism the developers have made a concerted effort to keep *Blitzkrieg* fun and simple to learn. By way of example, though you have to keep your guns supplied



The troops aren't as partial to a fag break as *Sudden Strike*'s soldiers, but the animation is more convincing.

with ammunition, thankfully doing so is not the logistical nightmare it was in *Sudden Strike*, since you just click on a selected supply truck and off it goes. Similarly, infantry units and gun crews can be topped up with new recruits if they aren't

completely decimated, with seemingly unlimited supplies of men available if you have the trucks to supply them and the depots nearby from which to refill. All of which leaves you hands-free to conquer the enemy.

Though the balance between simulation and stimulation is near perfect, *Blitzkrieg* isn't quite the second coming for real-time strategy games one would have hoped for. Aside from a set of missions that vary little in their objectives, the one major concern is the AI, which although solid, is hardly consistent.

#### GENERAL SUCCESS

On some of the more open maps I found the enemy general to be supremely challenging, with his tanks probing along the line looking for weaknesses. On other missions, usually the random ones, the enemy would remain encamped where they had been posted, allowing you to freely bombard the map until every enemy unit was wiped away, completely destroying any sense of urgency in the game. So inert is the AI that in some missions it's possible to win supposedly difficult assignments, using just a sniper and a couple of field guns. Add to this the option of speeding up or slowing down the game at will and such missions can be completed in minutes without a single casualty.

Despite such problems *Blitzkrieg* remains a superior game to *SS2* and in spite of the fact both games will have been released within six months of each other, *Blitzkrieg* is such a significant improvement that even *Sudden Strike*'s most staunchest allies should fall in line with the new order. Graphically *SS2* is crude by comparison and though *Blitzkrieg* falls short of the spectacular set pieces offered in *C&C: Generals*, the smooth 3D units and detailed animations make up for the static scenery.

More importantly *Blitzkrieg* is by far the most accessible WWII RTS game made to date, yet it



#### SECOND OPINION

STEVE O'HAGAN

Make no mistake, had *Blitzkrieg* been made by Fireglow (developer of *Sudden Strike III*) it would have been called *Sudden Strike III*. It's really so similar to its illustrious forerunner that to the untrained eye it's practically indistinguishable. But to many, myself included, this is not necessarily a bad thing. *Sudden Strike* was a great laugh, but was by no means perfect. And the many improvements added here – such as having infantry organised into squads, the improved handling of air power, the flexibility in the campaign structure and the added interest of more realistic units and weapons – means that anyone hankering after another dose of simplistic yet gritty WWII RTS action won't be disappointed. Just don't go expecting anything revolutionary – these developers may be from Russia, but the days of Lenin and co appear long gone.

retains a satisfying level of realism combined with a wealth of units and reams of in-game background reading. Some of the missions may lack pace and variety, but there are plenty of them and together with the multiplayer game and a promise of third-party add-ons, *Blitzkrieg*'s future looks bright. Had more time been spent on fleshing out the AI and adding a much needed *Shogun*-style Battle Mode, we could have been looking at a Classic. No doubt a sequel is already on the drawing board with just such an aim, though whether it will be called *Blitzkrieg 2* or *Sudden Strike IV* is anyone's guess. [✓]

## RANK AND FILE

### GET INTO GROUPS OF TEN, CHILDREN

Unlike most RTS games, *Blitzkrieg*'s infantry are preordained into ten-man squads, which make them far easier to organise across a crowded battlefield. For those that enjoy unnecessary micromanagement, you can disband infantry squads and direct each soldier as individuals, but it's hardly necessary. That said, specialist troop types do work alone, namely snipers and officers, and mighty powerful they are too. Snipers, aside from their innate ability to pick away unnoticed at entire squads and artillery crews, can even destroy trucks with their rifles. Needless to say these single soldiers are perhaps one of the most powerful in the entire game... too powerful in fact.



Troops can of course assault and occupy buildings. Here we see Russian troops learning the hard way that it's best to take bunkers from behind.

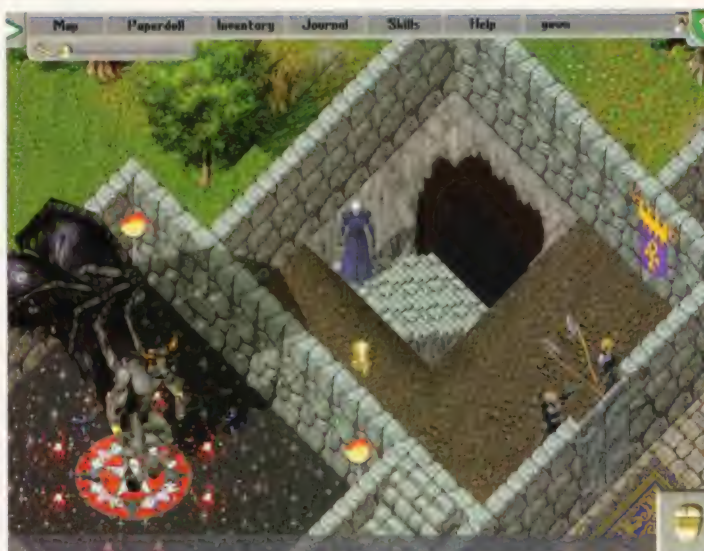
#### PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Realism that rarely gets in the way of gameplay
- ✓ The isometric view and 3D units complement each other well
- ✓ Cohesive mission structure that cleverly introduces new units
- ✗ Inconsistent AI
- ✗ Repetitive 'random' missions
- ✗ No skirmish mode

# 84

The best *Sudden Strike* yet





The Necromancer has the power to raise the dead, obviously.



Design your own house, if you can find somewhere to put it.

# ULTIMA ONLINE: AGE OF SHADOWS



£19.99 | Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: Origin | ETA: Now | [www.uk.ea.com](http://www.uk.ea.com)

REQUIRES P200, 32Mb RAM DESIRES 64Mb RAM and a P3 for 3D version

Five years on and *UO* is still going strong. **Chris Anderson** puts the latest expansion through its paces

**IN AN** attempt to breathe life into the longest-running online RPG in existence, Origin has pulled out several plugs and introduced major new features with what will surely be one of the last expansions you'll see for *Ultima Online*.

The player base may still be reasonably intact, but with new competition appearing all the time *Ultima Online*'s days would appear to be numbered. It's mainly the graphics engine that's the culprit, although the dated interface, which goes way back to the days when single-player *Ultima* reigned supreme, plays its own part in ensuring *UO* sits firmly at the bottom of the technological ladder.

## HOME SWEET HOME

Of course, none of this will deter the faithful, and this expansion gives them plenty to shout

## IN PERSPECTIVE

### EVERQUEST

Reviewed Issue 80, Score 85%  
EQ is still the one to beat, and with EQ2 looming, the future is not bright for *Ultima Online*.

### ASHERON'S CALL 2

Reviewed Issue 126, Score 78%  
This is the exact opposite to *Ultima Online*: cutting edge graphics technology with very little gameplay under the gloss.

about. *Age Of Shadows* brings customised housing to the *Ultima Online* experience.

This basically means you can design your own house right from the ground up if you can find a plot of land to stick it on. Malas, the new landmass,

has plenty of room for new housing but existing players are likely to claim many of the spots, so if you want to stake your claim you better get in there quick.

There are two new classes in the form of the Necromancer

and the Paladdin, both of which introduce a variety of new spells, and for existing characters a range of new combat moves are available to spice up what has become a rather simplistic combat system over the years.

*Doom*, a massive new dungeon on Malas will be the focal point for exploration in *Age Of Shadows*, and the new continent itself is big enough to keep players happy for a month or two.

**"The new continent is big enough to keep players happy for a month or two"**



Choose to play in 2D or this psuedo 3D view.

## EVER EXPANDING

*Ultima Online: Age Of Shadows* is an excellent expansion for existing players, but it's unlikely to bring new players into the fold. We can't quite recommend it wholeheartedly because for all its new features, at the end of the day it still has the *Ultima Online* engine at its heart and that simply won't be enough for many new players. **PC**

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Two new playable classes
- ✓ Design your own house
- ✓ New land mass and massive dungeon
- ✗ Dated graphics
- ✗ Cumbersome interface
- ✗ Fans will love it, nobody else will

# 79

Keeping the legend alive



# TROPICO 2: PIRATE'S COVE

■ £34.99 | Pub: Take 2 | Dev: Frog City/PopTop Software | ETA: April 25  
[www.tropico2.com](http://www.tropico2.com)

**REQUIRES** PIII 500, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card  
**DESIRES** P4 2GHz, 256Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

**'No-beard Pratchett' takes to the high seas**



You can zoom in and out to your heart's content.

**MY FIFTH** slave just escaped, my brothel is desperately short of ladies of negotiable affection, there's a banana deficit and my captain is so pissed off, she will not even board her ship. Oh and Spain has just invaded. Again. Suffice to say that Isle Pratchett is no paradise in *Tropico 2: Pirate Cove*.

Errol Flynn manage to turn pirates into cool anti-heroes, but since then, they've walked

a fine line (or should that be plank?) between being iconic and, well, just a bit naff. But the good thing about pirates is that everyone knows how they should work: the wooden leg, the parrot, the oversized hat, the magpie-like desire for shiny things and the penchant for a particular fermented sugar drink, so it's pretty hard to go wrong with them. *Tropico 2* has all of these clichés in abundance, including a healthy dose of 'avast, me hearties', and style-wise, it manages to pull it off remarkably well, if in a somewhat panto fashion.

## SCURVY KNAVES

Frog City and PopTop software have obviously taken heed of criticism levelled at the original banana republic-sim *Tropico*, namely that there were too many factions to keep track of. Here, the only groups to worry about are your pirates and your captives, and each group has diametrically opposed needs.

Your captives, who are either washed ashore, kidnapped or delivered as prisoners, do the

bulk of the work. They need basic food and sleeping accommodation, plus lots of scary décor. There's also a lot of what appears to be towel-whipping going on from the pirates, but the less said about that the better.

Your basic pirates need grog, food and a welcoming bosom, or in the case of female pirates, somewhere to 'peen' and pick up beauty aids. As they gain experience, they'll start demanding more extravagances, such as cigars, housing or even wenches with all their own teeth. This means you'll have to find these somewhere on your island, which usually means going out and kidnapping skilled workers to run various areas of your economy.

This is the bigger picture, because not only do you have to focus on your island, but also the surrounding waters. Your pirates will require ships, and supplies if you want them to patrol, kidnap workers and gain information on the neighbouring Spanish, English and French interests.



For that seedy effect, build your entertainment near the docks.



Each feature comes with its own visual overlay.

**"The 2D graphics look even more tired than they did in the original"**

If you want them to be a little more aggressive, you will have to arm them with cutlasses, cannons and muskets, so they can loot enemy ships for treasure and captives.

## CREWS CONTROL

This is where it gets rather complicated and even with fewer factions to appease, there's still a lot of balls to keep in the air. This is not helped by a reasonably sharp learning curve, whereby you're happily building a few ships and a treasure trove, and then suddenly, in the next mission, a neighbouring fleet is attacking you before you have time to say: "Let's talk about this over a banana daiquiri".

The 2D isometric, tile-based graphics look even more tired than they did in the original game. They have some nice details, but they are not nearly as absorbing as *Stronghold's* cut-away building look, which would have worked really well here. But the damage that *Tropico 2* causes on the

eye, it makes up for with its solid gameplay that forces you, at all times, to consider the repercussions of each action you take.

I always harp on about the fun factor in a game, because above everything else, I think this is the predominant feature in any good game and that is something *Tropico 2* delivers on. Whether you're press-ganging captives into becoming pirates, breeding parrots, or resurrecting the dead to become zombie workers, you'll have a lot of fun playing at being pirates. [A-]

## INPERSPECTIVE

### BEACH LIFE

Reviewed Issue 120, Score 76 %

*Beach Life* managed to put a contemporary spin on a tried-and-tested game formula. If you fancy something more like a god-game than a RTS, and you're pining for Ibiza, then put on a heater, turn up the music and play this.

### ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

Reviewed Issue 99, Score 82%

The most famous pirate game series. If you fancy something more puzzle-orientated and still want your yo, ho, ho, then the *Monkey Island* series is the best there is.

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Strong gameplay
- ✓ Lots of detail
- ✓ Amusing
- ✗ Tired graphics
- ✗ Sharp learning curve

# 78

Arggggh!





That barrel is as good as dead.

# DEVASTATION

■ £29.99 | Pub: NovaLogic | Dev: Digitalo | ETA: April 18 | [www.devastationgame.com](http://www.devastationgame.com)

**REQUIRES** PIII 700, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.4GHz, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

**A new wave of Unreal-powered shooters is here, but Mark Hill finds nothing to get excited about**

**IN ITS OWN** quiet way, *Devastation* has been building up expectation as a game that could well turn out to be the biggest FPS surprise of the year. The screenshots looked good, it's powered by the latest *Unreal* technology and it promised lots of gore-packed action. More importantly perhaps, it offered a proper physical world to explore, with virtually every object in sight (even recently decapitated heads) a potential weapon to

pick up and throw at your enemies. So can the finished game live up to its potential? Is it some kind of wonderful cross between the violent bloodlust of *Soldier Of Fortune II* and the infinite interaction of *Deus Ex*? Is it going to be a sleeper hit that will live on for years thanks to a wonderful multiplayer? No. No. And no.

## LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

In the face of such mediocrity and shoddy design, it's hard to know where to begin. I might as well start by debunking all the features that had us excited in the first place. Surely the one thing it should have going for it is decent visuals, even if it was always going to come second to *Unreal II*'s sheer gorgeousness. This is far from the case. Despite some excellent-looking character models the impression you get as soon as you start playing is that a group of kids have made a mod using five-



You'll need the latest graphics card to make it look anywhere near decent.

## IMPERSPECTIVE

### UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING

Reviewed Issue 126, Score 94%

It has its critics, but *Unreal II* is one of the most entertaining shooters around, and it shows off very nicely just how amazing the *Unreal* engine really is.

### SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

Reviewed Issue 118, Score 92%

*Devastation* is more like the first *SoF*, but this one shows how to make the most of realistic weapons and an unhealthy dose of gore.





Devastation is going to need some serious patching before it's halfway playable.



The character models are cool, but that's about it.

year-old textures. The levels are flat, colourless, and exceptionally dull. But because of the demanding engine working beneath it all, you still need a beast of a machine to run it. Low frame-rates and choppy gameplay are common when there are a few characters

spilling, no gurgling gasps as throats are ripped by bullets, no hopping about yelling in agony as kneecaps are shotgunned out of existence. So, if extreme violence would have been enough for you to forgive its numerous flaws, that's out too.

## The animation is passable, but it doesn't quite do justice to the models"

on screen at once. The animation is passable, but it doesn't quite do justice to the models, which do in fact look fairly impressive when static.

Although the core of the gameplay is as simple-minded, narrow, repetitive and unsophisticated as the first *Soldier Of Fortune* and *Kingpin*, the gore is well within the normal bounds of an FPS. A bit of blood here and there, the odd head lopping off... There's no dismemberment or bowel

### WILL THINGS EVER PICK UP?

And what of the much-flaunted real physics? Well, it's true that you can pick up nearly everything you see: cans, bottles, gasoline canisters, chairs, and so on. Barrels roll and boxes are kicked across the room (usually to your extreme annoyance), and you can even look into microscopes. But the physics are far from real, and the objects are all so ugly and

textureless they might as well have been lifted from *Duke Nukem 3D*. While it's always nice to have interactive environments, it all seems a bit pointless within the context of the game. About the only useful thing you can do is grab a can of gasoline, throw it at some

enemies and then shoot it to cause a small explosion. Being able to pick up things (and crucially, keep them in an inventory) worked really well in *Deus Ex*, but here the thrill of throwing a chair across a room fades very quickly. It's all too limited and badly implemented. I can give you an example that also illustrates some of the under-par game design: in a level set in an asylum you're armed only with a stick and there's a small empty room with



At times it's reminiscent of *SiN*. And who wants to play that?

## LET'S ALL DEVASTATE TOGETHER

### IS IT ANY BETTER ONLINE?

Compared to the awful single-player, the multiplayer mode is far more interesting. There's no getting away from the drab-looking levels, but it's not much worse than any number of shooters and it beats the solo campaign hands down. There's a new type of mode to complement the standard deathmatches, CTFs and all the rest, called Territories. Each team has a base with a respawnner, so each time you die you will come back to life there. The object is to kill the opposing team permanently, for which you need to destroy said respawnner and then track all the survivors down. As usual, we will bring you an update on how the online game develops.



Multiplayer is the game's strongest feature.



"Even the ones armed with planks don't seem to notice your machine gun spraying into their face"



The weapons aren't particularly impressive.

Decent looking weapons, but the remote-controlled rat is the best.



narrated you'd be hard pressed to flesh a second-rate comic book out of it. Again the overwhelming impression is of a somewhat rushed effort when it came to coming up with a plot, characters and dialogue. How else can you explain the risible members of the so-called resistance, from your very own peroxide punk to some sort of beach babe and what looks like a skater from a *Tony Hawk's* game?

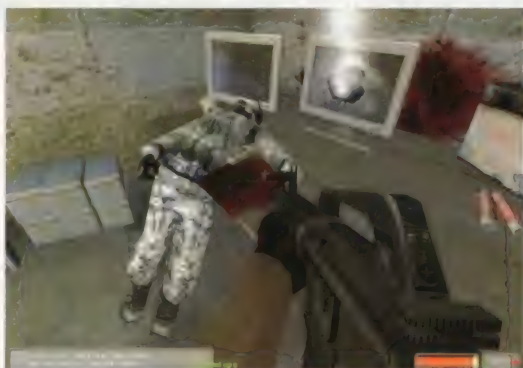
There are occasional cut-scenes, but the bulk of the background info comes in the journals your character keeps, which you can read at the start of each level. They're written by someone trying to sound literate and failing miserably. As an example, the blonde teen thug you play expresses himself like this on being captured: "My foolhardiness had been advantageous in the past but this time, I have been bested." They couldn't even get the commas right.

As you may well have gathered, *Devastation* has turned out to be somewhat of a disappointment. Despite the odd tense moment and its relative freedom to interact with the surroundings, it's ultimately little more than an average shooter. **[C-]**

## ARCADE OR SIMULATION?

### THE CHOICE IS Y-YAAAAWN...

Before starting a new game you have to choose between sim or arcade mode. You should choose the first unless you want to drop another 10 per cent off the score. The game is simple enough without making it more arcade-like. In sim mode you have to pick up health (rather than automatically absorb it), you have a weight limit you can carry and the crosshair disappears when you're running. Stupidly, this mode also removes automatic reload. But hey, you can't have everything. No, really, you can't.



You can only carry a certain amount of weapons in sim mode.

weapons you can see through some windows. The door is locked so, naturally, you pick up a trashcan and throw it at the window, reasoning that you'll break the glass and be able to climb through. Silly you. In fact, the trashcan, along with an assortment of boxes and bottles goes right through the glass and into the room. You continue through the door in the level that is open and, on reaching a certain point, trigger

a scripted moment. The door to the room you were trying to get into opens by itself, miraculously producing some guards out of thin air too. You have to backtrack, deal with the guards and then get your weapons. Just like real life.

### I'M WITH STUPID

It doesn't stop there though. Another feature of the game is that you get team mates on your side to whom you



"Yes, I'll be sacking my agent after this atrocious gig."

can give some very simple orders: Attack, Defend, Hold and Follow. Again though, Digitalo has bitten of more than it can chew, producing some of the most atrocious team AI since *Daikatana*. They get stuck in doorways, shoot at walls as often as they do at enemies and generally drive you crazy by getting themselves killed thus ending the game. The only thing to do at times is to tell them to stay put while you fight on ahead. Even though their health replenishes itself constantly, they have a habit of running into the rooms of enemies, standing still while being shot or continuing to charge when they run out of bullets. The problem is that some levels are designed with their backup in mind, so leaving them behind makes it safer but also much harder.

The enemy AI isn't that much better, sometimes running off and appearing to sit down in the distance, most of the time just charging at you like imbeciles. Even the ones armed with planks don't seem to notice your machine gun spraying into their face.

The sounds of the weapons, however, are fairly convincing, having been improved late on in the development process after criticisms from many who played the demo.

### LIKE WHATEVER, DUDE

If you're hoping for a decent story to lift it above averageness, forget about it. While the basic concept is appealing enough (lead an underground resistance movement in the year 2075) it's so badly developed and

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ You can pick things up
- ✓ Entertaining multiplayer games
- ✗ Ropsey environment graphics
- ✗ Laughable AI and story
- ✗ Needs patching

# 50

Promised so much, delivered so little



PC CD-ROM

### THE BARBARIAN CAVALRY CHARGE



The savage barbarian tribes are undisciplined but terrifying warriors. The Germanic cavalry units can move rapidly across rough terrain as they chase down the enemy. Targeting any slow moving infantry, they lower their lances and charge with devastating results.

### THE ROMAN TURTLE FORMATION



Well organised and perfectly drilled on the battlefield, the Roman legions have conquered huge areas of the known world. Through rigorous training and numerous battles the Legionaires work as a team to defend themselves, locking their shields together in a turtle formation and making themselves almost immune to arrows and light missiles.

### THE EGYPTIAN MIRAGE



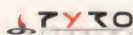
Driven by the divine presence of their Pharaoh, the fanatical Egyptians are a powerful force on the battlefield. The Pharaoh's Officials have the ability to make their forces appear to grow in number. Sapping enemy morale, lesser Generals have even fled in panic when faced with these mirages, believing there to be even more fearsome Egyptian warriors than is actually the case.



"Pacy, intuitive...  
there is much to  
enjoy here."

For the glory of the Empire  
**PRAETORIANS**  
WWW.PRAETORIANSGAME.COM

From the makers of the COMMANDOS series



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**EIDOS**  
INTERACTIVE





Good to see the Phantom in action for a change.



How could you possibly shoot something so darned cute?



Come fly with me.

# STRIKE FIGHTERS: PROJECT 1

■ £29.99 | Pub: Just Flight | Dev: Third Wire Productions |  
ETA: Out Now | [www.justflight.com](http://www.justflight.com)

**REQUIRES** PIII 500MHz, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D Card  
**DESIRES** 1GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D Card

**An FPS set in the world of trade union disputes?**  
**Paul Presley gets the wrong end of the stick again**

## SO, ANOTHER

month, another flight sim depicting an under-explored avenue of flying history. This time it's to the '60s that our travels take us with *Strike Fighters: Project 1* (indicating there are several more waiting in the – ha, ha – wings).

F-4 Phantoms, F-100 Super Sabres, A-4 Skyhawks and F-104 Starfighters are the weapons of choice, all flying the skies of a 'fictional' Middle Eastern territory with large oil reserves (probably the same

one causing trouble in the current series of 24).

## PLANE DULL?

What could have been an interesting adventure in flight, à la *IL-2 Sturmovik*, is sadly let down by one crippling flaw – it's an extraordinarily dull affair. It comes across like an exercise in flight dynamics

with a hastily-put-together 'game' section bolted on the front.

It's not wholly awful, though. Dogfights can be a lot of fun, thanks to the sense of primitive technology (there are practically no radar-guided missiles for instance), and from a technical point of view, things generally hold up solidly. But you just can't shake the constant feeling of

'flown one mission, flown them all' each time you take off.

There's no real sense of progression or achievement when you fly. Campaigns offer no impression of a war being fought, the briefing menus are sparse, and the terrain is about as lifeless as an inner-city prostitute paying the rent.

## ONE-HIT WONDER

Mainly there's just a lack of emotion to it all; that vital magic that infused *Sturmovik* with so much. *Strike Fighters* is a good effort at simulating a different era of military flying history, but, like the seedy pub that has a cheap stripper in every Tuesday lunchtime, once you've sated your initial curiosity, you're unlikely to want to go back.

It's hard to completely damn *Strike Fighters*, as it shares a lot of the same love of its subject as the *IL-2 Sturmovik* series. Unfortunately, the fact that the titular aircraft are so well modelled just shows that the

developers became too caught up in their passion to leave any energy for the rest of the game. Ultimately, it all comes across more like a *Combat Flight Sim* add-on than a game in its own right. Maybe *Project 2* can get it right? **PCZ**

## PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Interesting choice of aircraft
- ✓ Nice modelling
- ✓ Some good dogfighting
- ✗ Featureless landscapes
- ✗ Very repetitive
- ✗ Clumsy presentation

# 68

**A West End peep show to *Sturmovik's* Spearmint Rhino**



That'll teach you to put me on a standby ticket.

## INPERSPECTIVE

### IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 92%

Historical flight-simulation (is that really a word? – Ed) done just right. This game couldn't be more highly recommended.

### THE DAM BUSTERS

Reviewed Issue 121, Score 78%

Again with the historicals (You're just making them up now – Ed), but, this time, in the shape of an official *Combat Flight Sim* add-on pack.



# RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC

■ £19.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Ubi Soft | ETA: Out Now

**REQUIRES** P3 600, 128Mb RAM and a 3D card

**DESIRES** P3 1GHz, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and an analogue joystick

**It's French so it must be weird, thinks James Lyon**

**ON THE** whole, platform games have given up being bastard hard, substituting challenge with mass and variety. Collecting a stack of objects has become a stand-in for the lack of real danger in infinite continues and regular restart points. We could protest, but, hey, as long as it's done well, we can't knock the enjoyment we wring out of them.

*Rayman 3* starts as it means to go on: chucking you around linear levels on a straightforward path to the finish. In each self-contained section you collect various power-ups that give you limited abilities to use in making your way to the exit. In the main, it plays to its strengths in trying to offer more than your bog-standard platforming, switching from basic styles of shooting and puzzling to keep your interest. And it's all done with that traditional, French weirdness – the part where you shrink down



**Globox doesn't do much but his comments can be amusing.**

into your shoe and drive after one another for no reason at all is a particular highlight. It also offers some replay value in collecting high scores to trade in for external sub-games.

To be negative, it's a little brief and not that difficult,

although this does mean it doesn't out-stay its welcome. Thankfully, it's filled with a self-referential wit that makes it enjoyable to play (Rayman's companion, Globox, being just on the right side of getting on your tits) and what is here is



**Exactly the same as the consoles but £10 cheaper. Hmm.**

never short of entertaining and good-looking. And it's at least £10 cheaper than the console versions. Not the best platformer but the best current platformer for the PC.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT 75**  
Short but sweet  
platforming action



**Rayman holding a large plum. Yesterday.**



**They just don't make them like this anymore. Rejoice.**

# GLOBAL POWER

■ £19.99 | Pub: GMX Media | Dev: Golem Labs |  
ETA: Out Now | [www.gmxmedia.net/gp](http://www.gmxmedia.net/gp)

**REQUIRES** P200, 64Mb RAM **DESIRES** That'll work

**Heavy-duty strategy or lengthy snorathon? Let's ask Chris Anderson**



**It's like the best geography lesson you've ever had.**

**STRATEGY** games don't come any heavier than this. Take a look at the screen shots and gasp in amazement at the obvious complexity of it all. Drool with excitement at the myriad of stats at your disposal as you attempt to take over the world. *Global Power* gives you the opportunity you always wanted to become a power in politics. Show that Blair bloke how it's done by handling your country's economy, trading with

other nations, handling every detail of your country's growth, and ultimately proving what a waste of time it all was by pressing the magic button that wipes out half of the planet.

It all sounds terribly intriguing and deep. In reality, it's not. *Global Power* is a turn-based spreadsheet with awful graphics and hugely boring gameplay. If you are an absolute out-and-out anorak who loves nothing more than playing with numbers and

**"Global Power is a turn-based spreadsheet with awful graphics and hugely boring gameplay"**

reading occasional reports that tell you how your number-twiddling has affected the world around you, then you might just glean some entertainment out of this. If, on the other hand, you are normal, you will probably hate it.

**PCZONE  
VERDICT 30**  
If you like this game, I  
hope I never meet you

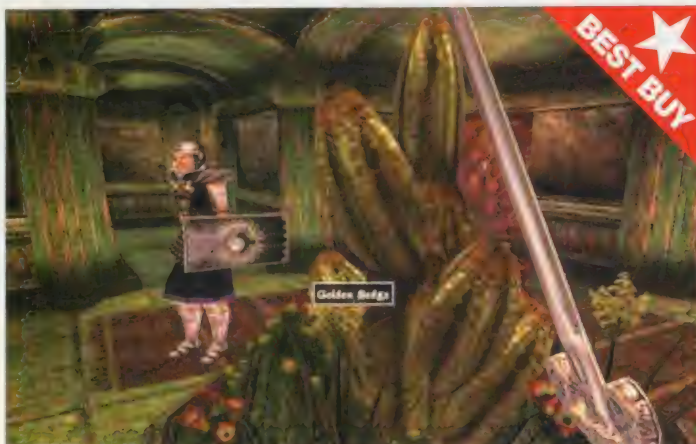


# REPLAY

The place to go when you've got no dough

## THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND GOLD

■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | ETA: Out Now



Tribunal: the best just got better



Morrowind: if you don't like it, you're probably insane.

**THERE ARE** so many reasons why this is a must-have package it's difficult to know where to begin. We can start with the fact that *Morrowind* is one of the best RPG's ever made on any platform, we can talk about its deep interaction, wonderful scenery and revolutionary character development system. Or then again we could mention the fact there are so many mods available for it now that the original game is only the beginning of your adventures and many user-made add-ons await if you still want more. Then of course there's the fact that *Tribunal*, the first *Morrowind* expansion, is also included in this package. *Tribunal* brings a new town, new dungeons and quests (and of course monsters) to the *Morrowind* experience,

and while it's admittedly a little small in scope compared to the original game, it certainly expands the excellent storyline in fine style.

This in itself would make *Tribunal* a worthy add-on, but the developers also re-worked the journal system to make it much more user friendly, and a new annotatable map and general tweaks to the game engine make the expansion desirable as much from a technical standpoint as for pure gameplay reasons.

If, after all this, you are still not convinced this compilation should be at the very top of your RPG shopping list, let's face it, you never will be.

Chris Anderson

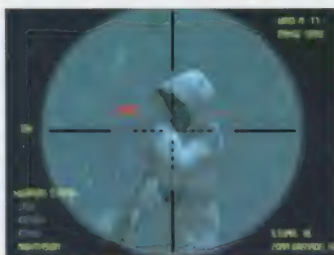
PCZONE VERDICT

94

## SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II GOLD EDITION

■ £19.99 | Pub: Activision | ETA: Out Now

**RAVEN'S** gore-athon is back in one of those gold packages publishers so like to thrust onto the shelves. In this case it seems a little more pointless than usual, since this doesn't bring together add-on packs and is simply the original game with the latest patch – which you can download for free. There are lots of fixes and improvements, a whole bunch of maps and a new multiplayer mode called Demolition. The single-player is as enjoyable as ever though – if you can get past a seriously dodgy first mission. It's as mindlessly violent as anything you can



Say goodnight.

imagine, but the AI puts up a hell of a fight. It's also much less objectionable than the first game. You still play as that tit John Mullins, but neither the story nor the mission parameters are as xenophobic and right-wing as they were in the original title. You might get bored of the endless solo shooting though, which is why Raven has concentrated its patch on boosting an already popular multiplayer. As well as the new mode and new maps, this also includes PunkBuster support, to wipe out all those cheaters. But as any *Counter-Strike* player will know, it's only a matter of time before new cheats come out.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

85



Yes, you do get to fight against the Alien queen.

## AVP 2 GOLD

■ £29.99 | Pub: VU Games | ETA: Out Now

**THE MOST** terrifying first-person shooter ever, melding three varied campaigns into one exhilarating game. One of the most feeble, unimaginative, tedious and hastily/incompetently pasted together expansion packs ever. That's what you get in this *AvP2 Gold* package.

*Aliens Vs Predator 2*, although showing its age now, is still one of the ten best shooters currently on the market. Playing through three campaigns as a marine, a Predator and then an alien (face hugger, chest burster and drone), each set of missions provides a unique experience. The horror and tension of playing as a marine is unrivalled by any other FPS. The hunting of prey when playing as a Predator is more akin to playing a sci-fi version of

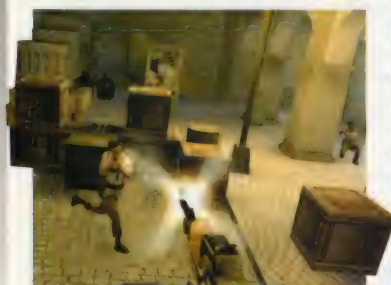
*Thief*, and the puzzle-filled alien missions are both frustrating and challenging at the same time. While the campaigns vary in quality (the marine missions proved my personal favourite, the alien one my least), as a whole, *AvP2* is one shooter no-one should miss.

Which brings us onto the expansion *Primal Hunt*. This is everything that *AvP2* isn't. Boring, brief, unchallenging, monotonous. I could go on but I think you get the picture. It would have been better if *AvP2* had just been re-released for 20 quid. As it is, the inclusion of *Primal Hunt* means the score suffers. Shame really.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT

84



If you love violence, you'll love *SOF2*.



# SERIOUS SAM GOLD

■ £19.99 | Pub: Take 2 | ETA: Out Now

**IT'S TIME** to re-encounter the biggest chainsaw-wielding, gun-toting moron ever to grace your computer. Serious Sam is Duke Nukem's dim-witted cousin, and the gameplay is so simplistic you may begin to think the main character actually designed some of the levels. A typical mission goes something like this: open a door, find a rocket launcher and a machine gun, go outside into a massive area suddenly filled to bursting with thousands of mindless creatures all hellbent on running into you, wipe them all out, begin next level. It's that simple. To make up for it though, it also sports an

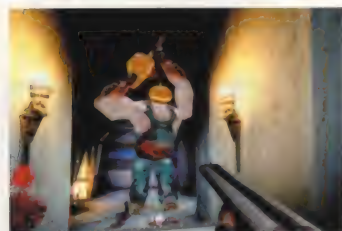


amazing engine (not in vain do people call it an engine without a game), capable of creating vast, populated environments and animating enemies that stand hundreds of feet tall. If only there was some substance to the gameplay, the moments where you meet these true behemoths would be called classic. The co-op multiplayer mode is the best element, more like a wild fairground ride than a regular shooter. This edition includes both games (*Serious Sam* and *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter*), but why you'd bother with the first when you've got the second is beyond me.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

75



It may lack brains, but there's plenty of brawn on show.

# CRAZY TAXI

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now



Not a game to be accused of depth and complexity. Bags of fun though.

**IN A RECENT** supertest on console conversions, *Crazy Taxi* was criticised for being an exact replica of a two-year-old Dreamcast game, selling for the same price as a new PC game. Well, now there's no excuse not to enjoy this excellent conversion, other than the fact that, well, it's now pretty much a three-year-old Dreamcast game, and who wants to play one of those?

*Crazy Taxi* started life as an arcade machine, and you can tell by the simplicity of the missions and the manic nature of the gameplay. It's nothing like the freeform beauty of *Grand Theft Auto III* (which sports a taxi submission mode that I find much more entertaining than this), but

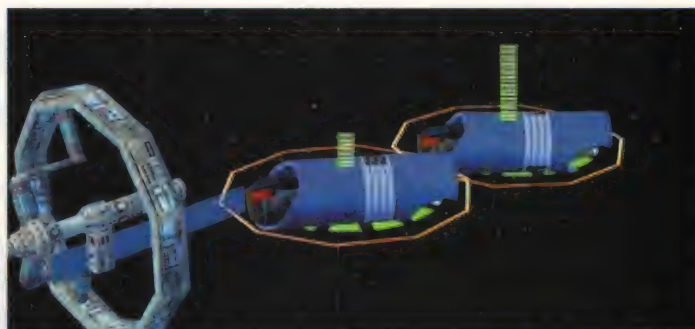
then it's not trying to be. This pays as much attention to the rules of the real world as a *Super Mario* title, with bizarre physics encouraging all sorts of stunts and complex combos. It's all good fun, but if you're anything like me you'll be bored within a few hours, because there's nothing to do except beat your own high scores. If that's what you're after, then fine, but this is still something best enjoyed in short blasts.

As a console game, *Crazy Taxi* has earned itself a place in gaming history. But as a PC title it all seems a bit pointless.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

74



Lost in space? The free strategy book will sort you out.

# EMPIRE EARTH GOLD

■ £34.99 | Pub: VU Games | ETA: Out Now

**EMPIRE EARTH** remains one of the most ambitious strategy games ever devised on PC. In an admirable attempt to combine the depth of *Civilisation* with the addictive gameplay of titles such as *C&C*, *Empire Earth* takes players on a whirlwind tour through the evolution of man, from the prehistoric era right up to the modern era and beyond. And while it's true the game proves a little too ambitious for its own good at times, forsaking real depth and development for simple progress and automated gameplay, it remains a very enjoyable RTS nonetheless.

This compilation includes the first *Empire Earth* expansion, *Art Of Conquest*, which takes players beyond the nano age to the space age and introduces new technologies, units and galactic warfare, and while it might seem a little steep at £34.99 even with the expansion pack thrown in, the inclusion of the Prima strategy guide for free goes some way towards making up for this, particularly for people who have never played the original.

Chris Anderson

PCZONE VERDICT

80

## LEFTOVERS

### PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?

Xplosiv is the name of the game (or rather the name of the publisher) for the five reprobates hanging around like an elevator encased fart in this month's leftover column.

*Ultra 3D Pinball* (£4.99, out now), is one of the more entertaining pinball games kicking about on the PC, offering amusement park ride themed tables to play on (15 in all), which should prove varied enough to keep your thumbs (or index fingers in this case) busy for a good few days. 65 per cent.

*Sega Marine/Bass Fishing Double Pack* (£4.99, out now), offers all you monitor fishermen the chance to sit at home in the warmth and bait fish. However, poor graphics and the keyboard controls (unless you can get your fishy fingers on a virtual rod) mean that the experience is somewhat of a limp one. 45 per cent.

If you like Mah-Jong then check out *Shanghai Second Dynasty* (£4.99, out now), which features four different versions of the game and allows up to four players. Well worth checking out and you're far less likely to lose tiles behind the sofa. 70 per cent.

*Gabriel Knight 3: The Blood Of The Sacred, The Blood Of The Damned*, not only has a stupidly long title, but is also a poor adventure game which should be avoided at all costs, unless you're desperate to play a retro-style puzzler. Even at £4.99, you should think long and hard. 40 per cent.

Finally there's *Hexen II* (£4.99, out now). No doubt retro lovers and nostalgics still rate this fantasy-based FPS. Quite frankly it's so dated now, that it's simply not worth the bother, even if it was good at the time. 49 per cent.

Martin Korda



Gabriel Knight 3



Hexen II



Ultra 3D Pinball



# UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer evolution

## MULTIPLE CHANCES

What's all this about then?

Some PC games are exceptionally flaky on release, with bugs and omissions that are subsequently fixed over time with patches. When this happens, we'll take another look and see if the score is worth upping. By the same token, massively multiplayer games are ever-evolving, and because of this, we'll be revisiting major releases to see what's changed over time.

This is also the place where we take a proper look at the multiplayer side of games. As we regularly review titles before they go on sale, often there are no public servers up and running, so instead of telling you how we think the game is going to play, we'll wait and do a proper multiplayer review here, outlining how many servers are up and how the game plays online.

**MULTIPLAYER**

**UPDATE**

## NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2 V1.3

■ £34.99 | Pub: VU Games | Dev: Monolith |  
ETA: Out Now | [nolf2.sierra.com](http://nolf2.sierra.com)

**REQUIRES** 500MHz processor, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card, 56K modem

**DESIRES** 1GHz processor, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card and high-speed Internet

**Sick of wielding MP5s and Stens, Richie Shoemaker brandishes his banana**

**TIMING IS** everything in the games industry, and it's only the exceptionally crafted (and/or cleverly marketed) titles that live beyond the usual six-month life cycle. Beyond that, a game must rely upon a multiplayer game or an outstanding expansion pack to keep it alive. For *NOLF2*, that life cycle is on the wane and though an add-on is waiting in the wings, there are just a handful of people playing

the game online – despite the recent patch.

Since we last visited *NOLF2* online way back in Issue 124, Monolith has added three new multiplayer modes to complement the game's unique co-operative game. Death and team deathmatch are fairly non-descript, as you would expect from a game that's hardly the most frenetic. With weapons like banana skins and bear traps



*NOLF2* now has a great new multiplayer mode, Doomsday.



Slipping hell! Watch out for those banana skins.

to make use of, however, DM isn't without a few laughs.

The most interesting new addition to the game is Doomsday, a variant on capture the flag, where two teams must scour the map for three parts of the Doomsday Device. The first team to assemble the device at their base wins. To make things more feverish, each player's radar points in the direction of the three parts in a nod to *Day*

*Of Defeat*. It really is a lot of fun, despite the low turnout. If you own a copy of *NOLF2*, you owe it to yourself to give it a try. **B+**

## PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 122)	<b>93</b>
OLD MULTIPLAYER (124)	<b>68</b>
<b>NEW MP SCORE</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Bananarama</b>	

## THE REAL POWER BEHIND EUROPEAN ONLINE GAMING

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\*19ms ping time taken as an average from a selection of JOLTADSL users

\*\*Home500 Lite option with £58.75 set-up fee.

[www.jolt.co.uk](http://www.jolt.co.uk)



# FEEDBACK

**It's back, it's feedback – the forum for you to air your views on the latest games. Martin Korda sifts through your letters and makes your voices heard!**

## IT'S YOUR SHOUT

Feedback is here to offer you a platform to have your say about games we've reviewed over the past two issues. Whether you totally agree, or utterly disagree with us, we want to hear from you. And all you have to do to get your views in print is send an email to [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk) with 'Feedback' in the subject line. Please try and keep your views to under 100 words. Anything longer will either not be considered, or may have to be edited for size.

## CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4

REVIEWED ISSUE: 128, SCORE: 90%

### What we thought

"Watching the 2D engine is as revelatory as a blind man seeing for the first time, or a virgin touching a girl after years of self abuse."

### What you said

Sports Interactive has done it again. Love the 2D engine. Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant. I would write more but I've got a football team to manage.

*Dave Clifford*

I'm not impressed. The 2D match engine doesn't work, and the new transfer rules spoil the game for me. Thanks for ruining a legend of a game.

*Max Stone*

The boys have done good again. I'm so addicted to this game I haven't seen daylight for...err...well, days. Weeks, actually. The 2D match engine is, as you say, 'a triumph' and works surprisingly well. The only thing I

would comment on is the score you gave it. This is by far the best game ever and deserves at least 95 per cent. But I suppose I can forgive you that error, as the review was otherwise spot on. Just don't do it again.

*P Mortimer*

### Comment

Kiss goodbye to your lives (again). CM4 seems to have done the trick for most of you. It's a shame the joy of bartering for players has been sullied by the new transfer window and clubs being skint these days. That'll teach 'em to buy shit players eh?

## COMMAND AND CONQUER: GENERALS

REVIEWED ISSUE: 127, SCORE: 86%

### What we thought

"While *Generals* may not be pushing the boundaries of the RTS very far, it is pushing the boundaries of C&C. *Generals* has earned its Essential award through sheer level of detail, dribblesome graphics and a game that, above everything else, is simply damn good fun to play."

### What you said

My friend and I were really excited about playing C&C: *Generals*. Then, five hours after starting it, it was all over. It might look stunning and have a borderline passable storyline but this must be the shortest game ever. Not to mention the fact that your computer has to be an absolute BEAST to play it properly, or that EA expect you to



Same old gameplay, but it looks great and is still fun to play.

buy extra copies to play it on a LAN. Sadly, it's just more of the same and it would seem this is as disappointing an ending to the series as I could have imagined.

*Richard Cross*

I have to congratulate you for not selling out and giving C&C: *Generals* a Classic award. Despite it being a great-looking game, the gameplay is very similar to the previous instalments. Entertaining it is, innovative it is not. Where it does do well is in its three sides which are all very different to play as, and the way that it presents the story through some great cut-scenes, making this a great game, if not one which will linger in the memory for years to come

*Peter Dance*

### Comment

Like a cheap slapper, C&C: *Generals* is good looking, mindless entertainment but really won't satisfy those in search of something deeper. But if that's the kind of thing you get off on, you won't find much better than this.

## MASTER OF ORION III

REVIEWED ISSUE: 128, SCORE: 59%

### What we thought

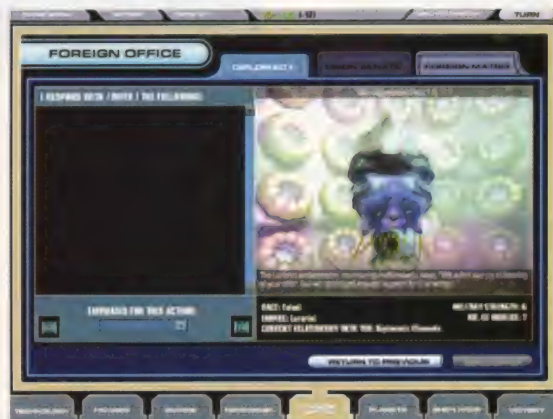
"This third instalment represents a step backwards for the series."

### What you said

What a waste of time, effort and money *Master Of Orion III* is. Charging home from the shop, having waited years to see the sequel to the excellent *Master Of Orion II*, I ripped off the

**"Everything about it is bad, from the interface to the useless macro-management system"**

**A RYAN ON MASTER OF ORION III**



The third installment of the *Master Of Orion* series is poo.

packaging and installed the game, only to find one of the ugliest and most disappointing games I've ever had the misfortune to play. Everything about it is bad, from the interface to the useless macro-management system. And as for the combat graphics! In all, *Master Of Orion III* is a huge let down and deserves no more than 35 per cent. And that's only because I'm feeling generous today.

*A Ryan*

What a disgrace. *Master Of Orion III* has ruined an excellent series with its amateurish

presentation, poor AI and laughable graphics. Rarely have I been more disappointed with a game. I loved the first two games and couldn't wait to get my grubby mits on this one, but I wish I'd waited to read your review first. That's 30 pounds I could have spent on something much more fun. Like cans of paint I could watch drying on a wall.

*RAXOR*

### Comment

And you know what? We didn't receive review code for this one until it went on sale. Wonder why that was?



The 2D match-engine gamble seems to have paid off.



# STEALTH SUPERTEST

**Mark Hill plants a bug under the table to record the quietest discussion yet**

**LOOKING** Glass's *Thief* introduced the concept of stealth into PC games and added a welcome new dimension to the mindless trend of loud, non-stop action shooters. Since then we've seen developer after developer introduce "stealth elements" into their titles, with even games like *Star Trek: Elite Force* and *Soldier Of Fortune II* including some sneaking about. But which is the best of the recent crop?

**Mark:** Stealth seems to have made its way into more games, but only as a small element.

**Dave:** Yeah, all the games here are shooters really. Compared to *Thief* which is the one that started the whole stealth thing. And it would be good to have a game that was purely stealth without any shooting.

**Richie:** Like a first-person shooter where the guy you control has no arms...

**Mark:** Or legs.

**Dave:** It would be very stealthy because he wouldn't be able to move. You'd just hide in a dark corner and never move. A bit like Korda in *Counter-Strike* come to think of it.

**Mark:** And really cheap to develop. There'd only be one room. Going back to the point though, *Splinter Cell* is the closest to a pure stealth game here. The whole point is to avoid all confrontation where possible.

## SPLINTER CELL

**Anthony:** *Splinter Cell* is probably the best game around today. It's a delight from start to finish but looking back it is a bit short.

**Richie:** It's so linear though.

You go down a corridor and there's only one way to go.

**Anthony:** You've missed the point, and anyway linearity isn't a bad thing – in *Splinter Cell*, the choice is about how you go about each stealth situation, not which corridor you go down.



The controls let *Splinter Cell* down, as well as some inconsistency in the mechanics.

**Mark:** Each level, each corridor even, is like a puzzle you have to solve. Do you take the guard out, stay in the shadows, climb the drain pipe...?

**Anthony:** Exactly, and you have so many cool options that other sneak 'em ups don't have, like throwing bottles, forced co-operation and the distraction cam.

**Richie:** Yeah, but I found the controls a bit rubbish. You don't think so much about how to get past each situation, but which buttons you should be pressing.

**Anthony:** You just suck at games.

**Paul:** I found it a bit uninvolved. The stealth is really well done, but it just didn't grab me. It's just an exercise in lighting.

**Richie:** What annoys me is

**Richie:** But because *Splinter Cell* is all about realism and detail it looks like you should be able to use everything you see, while *MGS2* doesn't

**"I found it completely uninvolved. The stealth is really well done, but it just didn't grab me"**

**PAUL PRESLEY  
ON SPLINTER CELL**

there's all this lavish detail, like the way bodies slump over you when you pick them up,

but when you try and jump on a table you just grunt and crash into the side of it.

**Dave:** In a stealth game you should be able to use anything that looks usable.

Or you can go for comedy props like the cardboard boxes in *Metal Gear Solid 2*. That's just brilliant.

pretend to be realistic so it doesn't matter.

**Anthony:** I disagree. When you play games, you always say things like 'wouldn't it be cool if you could do this,' and that's exactly how *Splinter Cell* has been made – with the developers playing all the other stealth games and adding every 'wouldn't it be cool' thing you could wish for.

**Paul:** But what about the story? It's so dull I just couldn't work up any enthusiasm to make progress.

**Richie:** You just get loads and loads of Tom Clancy rubbish. It goes on forever.



**Mark:** It doesn't even have anything to do with Tom Clancy, apart from having a very dull political story set in the near future. I did enjoy the game, but only in short bursts. It felt too much like hard work.

**Anthony:** You're all wrong as usual. Too many PC gamers still have this irrational aversion to third-person games, but I'm actually getting sick of FPSs. Third-person allows you so much more freedom of interaction – like the split jump and human shield moves, it's clearly the way forward.

## METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

**Anthony:** It's very different from *Splinter Cell*. Each new room and enemy encounter is like another puzzle to solve, as you try to find the optimum stealth path. Then if it all goes tits up you've often got a full-blown firefight on your hands.

**Richie:** I played it mostly on the PS2 and it's great, but it doesn't translate too well to PC.

**Dave:** Balls. It's absolutely brilliant.

**Richie:** What there is of it. You spend about eight hours watching and four hours playing.

**Dave:** The problem is that it gets dismissed on PC because it's a year and a half old and there's nothing new in the PC release.



**Metal Gear Solid 2 is more at home on the PS2.**





## THE CONTENDERS

**SPLINTER CELL**  
ISSUE 125, 94%



**NO ONE LIVES  
FOREVER 2**  
ISSUE 122, 93%



**METAL GEAR  
SOLID 2:  
SUBSTANCE**  
ISSUE 127, 83%



**IGI 2: COVERT  
STRIKE**  
ISSUE 127, 77%



**HITMAN 2**  
ISSUE 121, 74%



## THE JURY

**PAUL PRESLEY**



**MARK HILL**



**DAVE WOODS**



**RICHIE  
SHOEMAKER**



**ANTHONY  
HOLDEN**



In what other game would you be able to run inside a box?

**Anthony:** I was disappointed with the extra material. If you've already got the original you're not going to buy this unless you're a diehard fan.

**Mark:** It's one of those games that's been specifically designed for the PS2, and it feels wrong on the PC. It's nice to get the chance to play it, but I had to spend half an hour getting used to the controls.

**Dave:** And in a stealth game you need the controls to be intuitive.

**Mark:** I couldn't help wanting to plug a DualShock into my PC.

**Anthony:** You can, just get an adapter, in fact, you're mad if you even try and play this game with a keyboard.

**Dave:** They haven't added anything to *MGS2* to make it

feel like a PC title. It's a shame because it's still great. It's very much a puzzle game.

**Paul:** The story is great too, even though it's really badly told. They created an incredibly detailed universe that spans all the *Metal Gear* games.

**Mark:** What annoys me is that there's so much dialogue, and you keep getting interrupted with radio conversations leaving very little fluidity. I just kept skipping it all.

**Paul:** I think it works for the PlayStation audience but not for a PC one.

**Anthony:** The first *Metal Gear Solid* almost nailed the interactive movie concept, with a great balance of narrative and action, but the sequel





**Solid Snake: solid buns.**

takes it way too far. Saying that, the *Metal Gear* games are so cool you can forgive them a few failings.

**Mark:** Why does every bloody game hero have to have a gruff voice? I'm so sick of it.

**Richie:** *Splinter Cell* is worse. Michael Ironside sounds like a 70-year-old man.

**Mark:** I like its lack of realism. It's almost like a sophisticated *Pac-Man* really. If you hide after being spotted, the guards forget they saw you, stuff like that. It's got a set of artificial game elements that are really fun once you take them on board.

**Richie:** Japanese games are not afraid to admit they're games, while something like *Splinter Cell* wants you to believe it's a realistic 800-page novel mixed with a movie.

**Anthony:** But how can you not love a game that lets you sneak around inside a cardboard box?

### NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

**Dave:** It's just a great game that happens to have stealth elements. I didn't really like that part of the game as much. The bits where it forces you to be stealthy pissed me off. I'm too impatient.

**Richie:** But even then you don't have to, it just makes it much more difficult because there are so many enemies if they see you.

**Dave:** There's one level where you have to take down a load of Wanted posters, and if the cops spot you they start chasing you down the street like you're in a Benny Hill sketch. Bits like that just didn't work. I preferred missions like the one where you have to sneak into an army base and then shoot your way out.

**Mark:** The levels are so linear and contained, though, that there's not much thinking involved in stealth. You even

get an icon when you're somewhere you can hide. I was extremely disappointed when I played it. I think it's a very average shooter.

**Dave:** Well it's not, obviously.

**Anthony:** Average? Are you actually insane? It's a brilliant game with hot ninja chicks in it. It's not really a stealth game, though, although the stealth elements, despite being really simple, are quite well done.

**Richie:** Some of the levels go on too long, making you backtrack three times.

**Mark:** There are some great moments in there, but most of it is indistinguishable from a dozen other FPSs. I liked the first level with the Japanese huts and ninjas, but then you're in the snow fighting Russians and I thought I was back in *NightFire*.

**Paul:** I agree. It seemed like just a generic FPS.

**Anthony:** Come on, are you playing the same game?

**Dave:** I thought it gave you a lot of freedom.

**Anthony:** For a game that isn't primarily stealth-based, there are a lot of things that put something like *IGI* to shame, like picking up bodies.

**Paul:** And it's funny too.

**Mark:** The conversations you overhear from the ninjas are funny, but the rest didn't even raise a smile from me. All those cut-scenes with the evil gay boss talking to his mother on the telephone were just embarrassing.

**Dave:** I'd argue it's the best game here, but not for its stealth elements.

**Mark:** I liked using the sword and shurikens. You can see how you could have a ninja

game, a bit like *Thief* but with assassination objectives.

**Anthony:** That's called *Tenchu*.

### HITMAN 2

**Paul:** An incredible disappointment.

**Anthony:** Now if you want to talk about average games...

**Dave:** It's a shame, because the first one was good.

**Paul:** It wasn't afraid to explore the fact that you're killing people for a living. In this one, you're just another anti-terrorist hero.

**Mark:** The original concept can offer such rich gameplay. Your objective is to eliminate a target and that is it. But that has been sanitised to such an extent that there's no point in calling it *Hitman* anymore. We'll have to make that first-person ninja game ourselves.

**Dave:** Dropping poison on to someone's lips while they sleep...

**Paul:** Aren't they doing a *Way Of The Tiger* game after you did that *Waiting To Happen*?

**Mark:** Possibly, but it'll be some kind of strategy title using the *Warrior Kings* engine if they do.

**Paul:** Why aren't we in charge of the world? Games would be so much better.

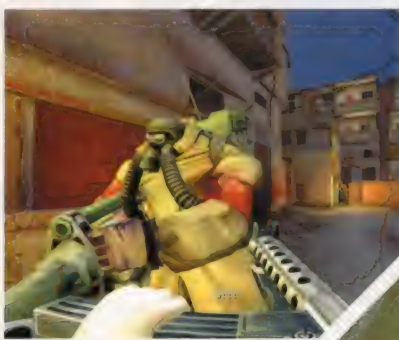
**Dave:** The toning down of *Hitman 2* comes mostly from publisher pressure and the American market. They had lots of sick ideas to start with but they had to take most



of them out. They haven't got the money and the power to do what they want.

**Richie:** They turned it into a console game basically.

**Paul:** If you put the lack of ambition aside, it's a solid enough game.



There are a lot of generic shooter levels in *NOLF 2*.

## THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

IT LOOKS LIKE QUIET IS OUT AND LOUD IS IN AGAIN



Since all of the games covered in this Supertest have been released very recently, there's little left on the horizon for stealth lovers. The granddaddy of the genre is back though, and *Thief III* – now in the hands of Ion Storm – should really blow its predecessors out of the silent waters and capitalise on all its good ideas. There's very little known at the moment, but we're hoping for a city full of houses to break into. Ion Storm will also be putting plenty of stealth into Mark Hill's wet dream, also known as *Deus Ex: Invisible War*. It's not called "invisible" for nothing. Elsewhere, there's some Nazi-dodging to be done in *The Great Escape*. What could be more stealthy than dropping earth down your trousers?





**Hitman 2:** Another example of games being sanitised and suffering for it.

**Anthony:** The whole disguise side of the game was improved too. But stealth doesn't really matter after a while.

**Dave:** They got into quite a bit of trouble with the Sikh community because of some of the content and they had to take it out with a patch.

**Paul:** How though? That was like a third of the game!

**Dave:** If they keep patching it, you might get to complete it before you get the disc out of the box.

#### IGI 2: COVERT STRIKE

**Dave:** I thought it was pretty awful, to be honest. Didn't like it at all. And the stealth part is really poorly done. But then I didn't really like the first one.

**Richie:** I loved the first one. But this one is identical.

**Paul:** It doesn't even look any different. I remember thinking: is this it? Is this all they've done?

**Richie:** I felt like I was playing a patched version of the first. All the flaws are still there.

**Dave:** You can't move dead bodies, can't climb through windows...

**Anthony:** You have to sneak around but you can fight your way out if you're seen.

**Mark:** There's a big difference between playing first and third person when it comes to stealth. In third person you don't get that feeling of tense danger and panic that you get in *Thief* for example. So at least you get that level of involvement here. The problem is that it's not that well done.

**Anthony:** This goes back to what I was saying earlier. You're an FPS freak who can't get his head around a different genre. First-person might have the immediacy but it just doesn't work in a stealth environment.

**Richie:** There's an awful infrared view as well, where everyone just looks like mannequins. What's that all about? It looks like some sort of developer tool.

**Paul:** It felt like they were bored and wanted to get the franchise out of the way, so they could get back to developing landscape technology or whatever it was they were doing before. [E]



**IGI 2** - can you tell it apart from the original?



### THE WINNER IS... SPLINTER CELL

#### IT'S ANOTHER TIGHT ONE



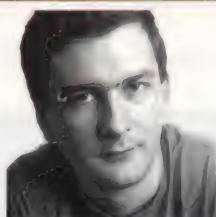
It could have gone either way with both *No One Lives Forever 2* and *Splinter Cell* getting two votes each. For Dave there was absolutely no doubt that *No One Lives Forever 2* was the best: "I just loved it and it made me laugh." Richie agreed, adding: "The stealth is really well implemented into the overall gameplay."

On the other side of the fence, Anthony and Mark both went for *Splinter Cell*. "It's just a delight from start to finish," enthused Anthony, "you're always nervous about being discovered." Mark didn't rave about it quite as much as Anthony did, but he still thought it was a good solid stealth game.

In the end it came down to the votes for use of stealth, with *Splinter Cell* shading it by three votes to two. It really couldn't have been any closer.

### THE VERDICT

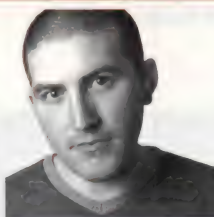
#### THE WINNER IN THE BATTLE OF STEALTH IS REVEALED...



**DAVE**  
NOLF2  
Splinter Cell



**PAUL**  
MGS2  
MGS2



**MARK**  
Splinter Cell  
Splinter Cell



**ANT**  
Splinter Cell  
Splinter Cell



**RICHE**  
NOLF2  
NOLF2

Best game?  
Best use of stealth?



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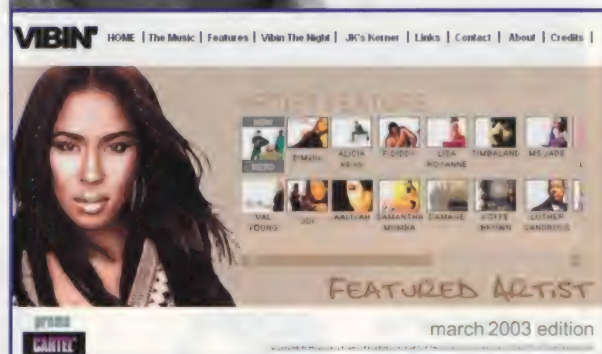
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# HARDWARE

## A WORLD GONE MAD



■ **HARD WIRED** Steve Spence

▲ I spent much of last month wandering around technology show CeBIT in Hanover, checking out the latest bits of hardware that are supposedly going to revolutionise our lives. And, with the likes of Intel currently bombarding our tellies with adverts urging us to go 'wireless', I thought this would be the main thrust of the show. Oh no. The future is far more useless than that.

Take the humble vacuum cleaner, for example. Not the ones that can charge around your room unaided while reciting poetry, but your bog-standard conventional hand-held. How in hell could that possibly benefit from having a network port? Well, at the CeBIT show, more than one company demoed units that connect to the web on a regular basis for 'health-check' diagnosis and software updates. Software updates? The world's gone completely mad, I tell you.

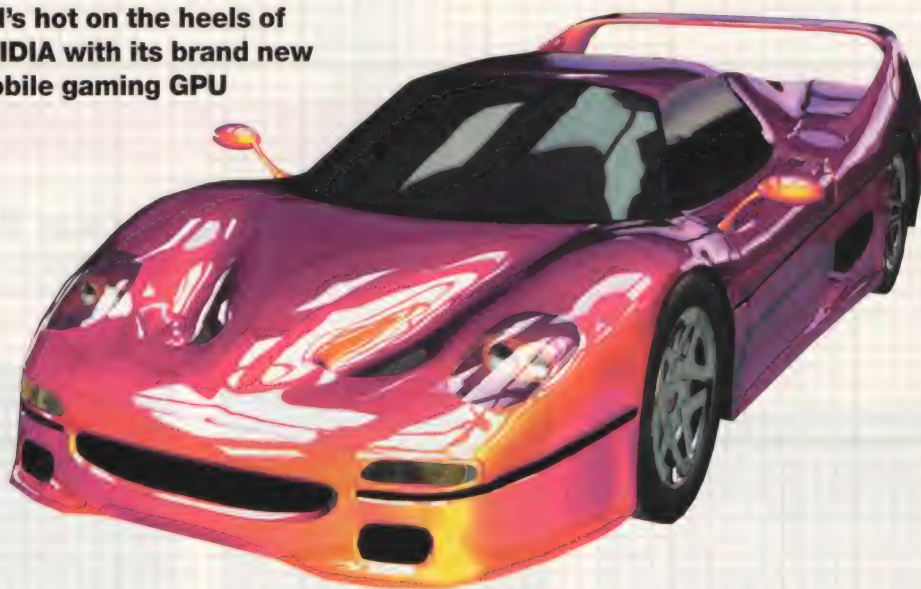
If we're not careful, the house of tomorrow is going to look more like a server room than a place to chill, and the next generation of computer virus will be one that hijacks your washing machine and shrinks all your clothes in a 190 degree wash.

The worst thing is that there are people out there that really think we want this kind of stuff – forget useful applications like smart burglar alarms or the ability to safety-check the brakes on your car, the crazy little men in white coats are determined we'd rather have a frying pan which beeps renditions of Gareth Gates' latest hits.

This is of course where you come in. I don't care how you do it, write to your MP, march in London en-masse, or simply spam those responsible with demands for useful electronic gizmos. Whatever. And if we see any of the sort of junk we've talked about this month making it onto the high street, we're sending Korda round to have words. And no-one wants that on their head.

## GOOD TO GO

**ATI's hot on the heels of NVIDIA with its brand new mobile gaming GPU**



**ATI WAS THE** first manufacturer to market with a DirectX9 graphics card for your desktop, and in doing so it stole a march on NVIDIA which suffered more than a few delays getting its GeForce FX cards to the market. We were surprised then to see ATI pipped to the post by NVIDIA for the first DirectX9 mobile GPU, but all said it was a pretty close run thing. Eight hours after NVIDIA's announcement at CeBIT, ATI rounded up the journos again and officially launched its DX9 mobile part, the Radeon Mobility 9600, all of which means the battle for the hearts and minds of your laptop has begun in earnest.

As the name indicates, the new mobile graphics chip from the Canadian designer of the GameCube 'Flipper' chip is deeply rooted in the technology seen in the Radeon 9600 GPU launched last month. It also has many architectural similarities to NVIDIA's mainstream laptop GPU, the GeForce FX Go 5600 covered last issue.

### OVERDRIVE

As ATI's first 0.13 micron part, the 9600 is probably the most logical choice to make into a mobile part. Because of the reduced die size, complexity and electrical consumption, it runs significantly cooler at comparable clockspeeds, an essential feature when you consider that most mobiles don't have the room to fit in a cooling option.

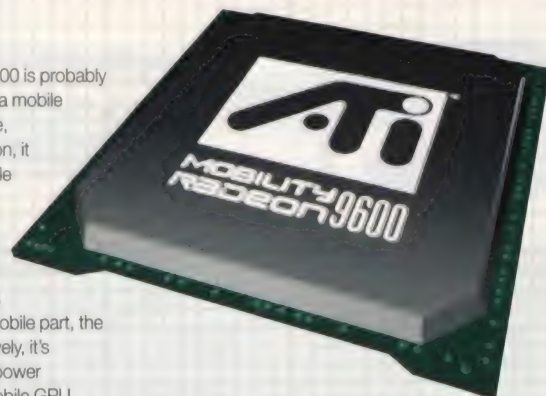
ATI claims that its Mobility 9600 is three times faster than its previous mobile part, the Radeon 9000 Mobility, but, impressively, it's managed this without changing the power requirements. As with any decent mobile GPU, there are a couple of key differences to its desktop counterpart. One of the most interesting is

'Overdrive', which at its simplest level is a semi-intelligent ATI-branded overclocking application. Based on a maximum clock speed or temperature (140C max), the GPU will dynamically scale its speeds, keeping the laptop as close to the mark as possible, regardless of use.

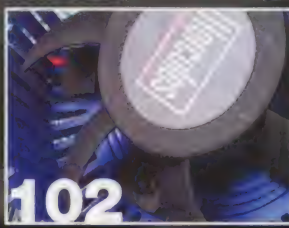
Of course it's not all about power burn, though. At the other end of the scale, when you need to put the GPU on a diet, ATI caters for you too with Powerplay 4, an improved version of its power management and clock gating which lets the GPU idle at only 0.5W.

The only minor disappointment is that you're going to have to wait a month and a half before 32Mb and 64Mb configurations appear, and as late as July for the 128Mb parts. On a happier note, we'll be getting both ATI and NVIDIA parts and testing them to hell and back as soon as we can.

**"ATI claims its new Mobility 9600 is three times faster than its previous mobile chip"**



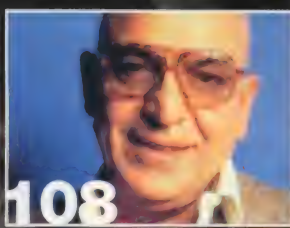




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# DRIVER WATCH

Despite DX9 being in its infancy, there are plenty of driver updates out there

WITH DIRECTX 9 launched a couple of months ago, we expected very little this month in way of updates, and were quite surprised to see just how many manufacturers had something new to offer.

First and foremost, Microsoft itself stepped in with DX9a, patching all manner of bugs, quirks and problems within the still-new API.

NVIDIA too has an important update this month, with its first official DX9 WHQL candidate – Detonator 43.45s. Weighing in at a little over 9Mb, it's a near-vital download for any NVIDIA user who has already made the move up to Microsoft's latest gaming API, but you can also find them on the cover DVD.

ATI also has a revision to its drivers, with a slightly tweaked version of Catalyst 3.2s. Having hit issues with the

original DX9, the new driver mostly has compatibility fixes, so if you aren't experiencing any problems with your current driver, it's probably best just to wait until Catalyst 3.3 hits the web in early May.

Unfortunately, ATI won't let us run the drivers on our DVD, so you'll have to download them.

Even the Windows XP service pack has seen a tweak, with 1a hitting the Microsoft site mid-April.

But we say that unless you've got any specific problems with SP1 which 1a is known to resolve, wait until the release of SP1b, hopefully due late May, which will bear the new Sun Java VM.

## MOTHERBOARDS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	VERSION	SIZE	WEB
Intel	ICH2.INF	3.20.1008	1.49Mb	support.intel.com
Intel	ICH4.INF	4.04.1007	1.31Mb	support.intel.com
SIS	IDE	2.0.3	5.42Mb	download.sis.com
SIS	AGP	1.1.4	5.38Mb	download.sis.com
VIA	Hyperion	4.46	1.31Mb	www.viaarena.com

## GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	VERSION	SIZE	WEB
ATI	Catalyst	6.14.01.6307	5.62Mb	www.ati.com
ATI	Catalyst	6.14.10.4029	4.62Mb	www.ati.com
Matrox	Parhelia	1.03.00.043	8.22Mb	www.matrox.com
NVIDIA	Detonator 40	43.45	9Mb	www.nvidia.com

## SOUND

MANUFACTURER	NAME	VERSION	SIZE	WEB
Creative	Audigy	11.2	12.67Mb	uk.europe.creative.com
Creative	Audigy 2	11.03.02.05	5.86Mb	uk.europe.creative.com
Hercules	Fortissimo	6.09	14.7Mb	europe.hercules.com

# INTEL CANTERS TO 3GHZ

The granddaddy of processors ramps things up once again...

SINCE ITS ARRIVAL in late Y2K, the Pentium 4 has had more face-lifts than Cher, but this month Intel is making one of the most significant revisions to date. Having started on a 400Mhz FSB (100Mhz quad pumped), the fastest current P4s operate at an enhanced 533Mhz FSB (133Mhz x 4).

**"The new P4 chips should mean price cuts across the current top end"**

With most manufacturers stepping up in 33Mhz increments, the next patch-up was set to run at 667Mhz FSB (166Mhz x 4). Instead, Intel has gone for the money shot, with a leap up to 800Mhz (200Mhz effective). This means a massive 50% increase in available bandwidth over the previous chips.

Of course, a new CPU requires a new chipset, so Intel has also announced 'Canterwood', or i875, and for the first time in years, it's abandoned the costly RAMBUS, opting instead for a Dual-Channel DDR memory controller like the one currently empowering the nForce2 and Granite Bay boards. What does



this mean to you? Faster performance and cheaper memory, which is a double whammy of goodness.

Connectivity has also been improved with eight USB2.0 ports, along with integrated 150Mbps serial ports, and improved networking options, with a gigabit Ethernet controller on the northbridge of the chipset.

The new processors are kicking off at a cool 3000Mhz, and as you might have guessed, the first 'Canterwood' systems will be prohibitively expensive. But as is usual, the announcement should mean price cuts across the current top-end, which means that now is the perfect time to start shopping around if you've been hankering after an upgrade.

## SNIPPETS



### WIRED FOR SOUND

With MP3 support slowly appearing in conventional appliances, it was inevitable someone would go the opposite way and wedge a hard drive in an AV unit. And so, £1,600 will today buy you the immerge SoundServer – a svelte silver CD-player-like unit designed to nestle in your hi-fi separates, storing between 250 and 2,500 hours of your favourite music, depending on your choice of compression. You can also pipe music all round the house with separate network clients and a central server. But at £600 each for the clients, it's not exactly cheap.

### COLD SHOWERS

Asetek is adding a new cooling system to its repertoire with the announcement of Waterchill. It can be used to cool your existing kit, or added to the Vapochill to provide an even more extreme cooling solution. It consists of a pump, radiator, GPU, northbridge and CPU blocks (Athlon/Athlon 64 and P4-compatible) and a bunch of piping, and is quieter and more powerful than all but the most lairy air-cooling. It should be on sale as you read this, with a full kit priced at under £200.

### HAMMER AND ANVIL

Following problems such as the lack of a proper 64-bit operating system, AMD's 64-bit Athlon64 is now looking at an autumn release. This is after news from Microsoft this month that a 64-bit version of WindowsXP, codenamed Anvil, will be available on the market around the same time. The new OS will properly support the X86-64 CPUs.



### ADSL BORK3D?

This month a 'small fault' knocked the entirety of BT's broadband network on its arse, thus taking the UK's ADSL ISPs offline at the same time. Alarm bells started ringing here at Geek Central as we're not at all chuffed to hear that such a small failure can take over half of the UK's broadband users offline. Needless to say, we'll be hassling BT over the coming month to give an explanation for why we were denied our pr0n. Watch this space.



# PCZONE BENCHMARKS

Comprehensive new benchmarks for every new graphics card. Check back each month for updates...

**THE MOST** important aspect of a graphics card is, of course, the chip the board is based around. And the only way to work out if one chip is better than another is to run it through a stringent set of benchmarks. Which is what we've done.

## OUR GUARANTEE

Because of the subtle differences in today's 3D cards, ensuring we're as accurate as possible is vital if we're going to be able to advise you fairly. Each month we'll update these as and when new cards or drivers are released, to show you which card is the fastest or the best value for money. You'll also be able to see where your card stands in comparison to all the new releases.

## TEST SYSTEM

There's little point in testing out tomorrow's 3D chips on yesterday's hardware so we've chosen one of the quickest AMD processors out there – the Athlon XP 3000+ with the improved Barton core. By choosing such a cutting-edge chip we can increase the total range of scores and reduce CPU limitation, thus increasing accuracy. The other key area where a GPU can end up bottlenecked by the PC is raw memory bandwidth, to which end we've opted for the ASUS A7N8X, the best nForce2 implementation on the market.

## CONFIGURATION

The next step is to standardise the method and level to which

boards are tested. Starting at the BIOS, all non-essential hardware is disabled and memory timings are pushed to their limit to maximise bandwidth and give the lowest latencies possible.

Secondly comes the operating system. After installing Windows XP, SP1 is installed, followed by DirectX9. We don't install a graphics driver until the entire system is prepared and imaged, but chipset drivers and USB drivers are rolled on, thus letting us restore a test machine quickly, and more importantly giving us the same software with which to test every new card.

With the OS installed and service packed, optimisations are made, including disabling System Restore, Automatic Updates, sound and networking,

plus little resident programs such as MSN Messenger.

Virtual memory is fixed at 2.5x the system's total RAM.

When we're happy the system itself is fully stable and ready for testing, all the benchmark software is installed, patched and prepared for testing with custom ini files and timedemos where necessary.


Finally, the entire windows install plus benchmarks is imaged onto a backup server, providing us with a clean build of our benchmark system as and when we need it.

## BENCHMARKING

With a system prepared, imaged and tested, it's time to install the first graphics board and driver. As a rule we only use the latest

WHQL certified files as this ensures we're testing with stable and bug-free drivers, though with new kit that isn't always possible. Of course, as soon as WHQL drivers are available we re-test it and adjust scores.

Each benchmark is run at least five times, with each number recorded and the 'spread' or deviation between scores calculated. As long as those five numbers fit within a certain tolerance (1% maximum) then we move onto the next set.

Between tests we restart the benchmark, and we reboot the system between changing resolutions or graphics settings as many games and benchmarks are prone to memory leaking which can throw all the scores askew. 

## BENCHMARKS

### TEST SYSTEM

#### HARDWARE

**Processor** AMD Athlon XP 3000+ 'Barton' 2167Mhz with 512Kb L2 cache

**Motherboard** ASUS A7N8X nForce2 Motherboard

**Memory** 512Mb Corsair PC3200 (DDR400 RAM), 2x256Mb DIMM in dual-channel operation

**Hard Drive** Western Digital 120Gb WD1200JB ATA100 hard drive with 8Mb cache, 7200RPM

**Sound** Disabled for all benchmarks

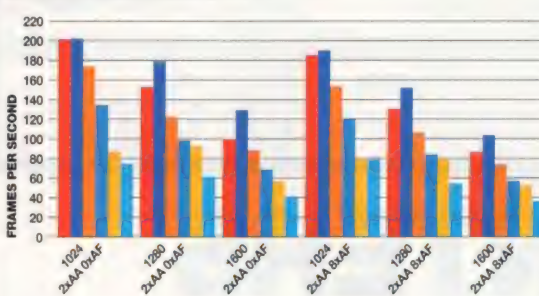
#### PLATFORM

Windows XP Professional Service Pack 1  
DirectX 9

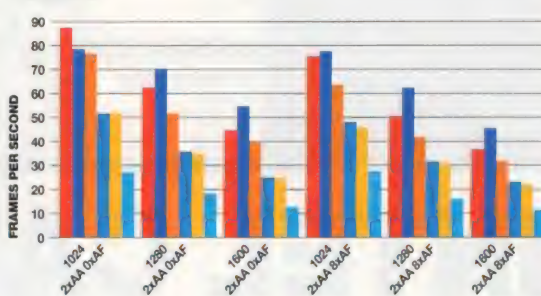
#### DRIVERS

ATI – Catalyst 3.1  
NVIDIA – Detonator 43.45

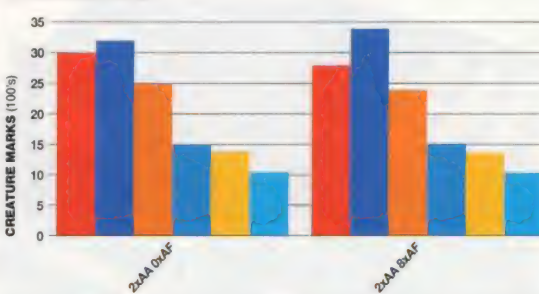
### UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003



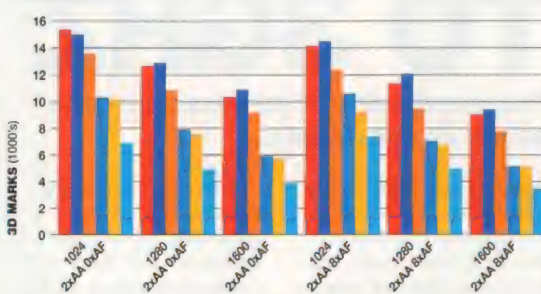
### AQUANOX



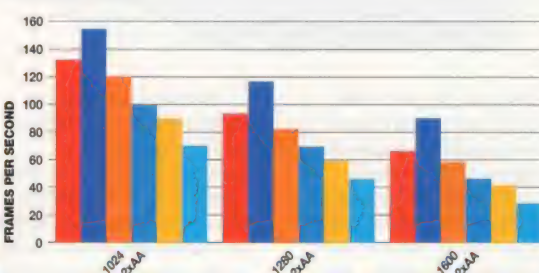
### CODECREATURES



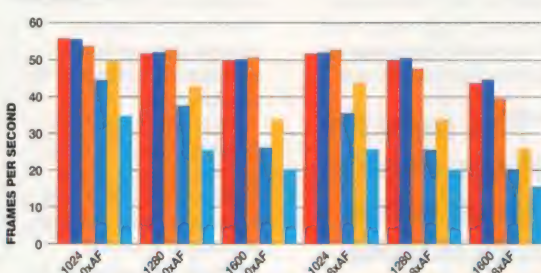
### 3DMARK 2001




### SERIOUS SAM 2





### COMANCHE 4





**CARD MANUFACTURER EXPECTED STREET PRICE**  
(Actual prices could vary on release)


 **Radeon 9800 Pro**  
ATI  
£399

 **GeForce FX 5800 Ultra**  
NVIDIA  
£359

 **Radeon 9700 Pro**  
ATI  
£265

 **GeForce FX 5600 Ultra**  
NVIDIA  
£140

 **Radeon 9500 Pro**  
ATI  
£150

 **GeForce FX 5200 Ultra**  
NVIDIA  
£100



# FX POWERPACK ULTRA/1000 PLUS GOLDEN SAMPLE

■ Price: £479.99 | Manufacturer: Gainward | [www.gainward.net](http://www.gainward.net)

**Another GeForce FX, but wait, you can hardly hear this one...**

**GRAPHICS CARD**

**IT MIGHT** not have been the best executed product launch, and with delays and rumours abound on the Internet you'd think that NVIDIA had dropped the ball with the GeForce FX card. But that's not the case at all. At one point it was even claimed that NVIDIA wasn't even going to come to market with the chip, something which has been finally disproved this month with cards arriving in both retail and mail order channels in relatively respectable numbers for cards with price tags in excess of £350.

Many manufacturers have decided to stick with NVIDIA's reference cooler, but we heard that Gainward, among others, was making a concerted effort to revise the cooler and lower the actual noise thrown out by the card, something that has proved a bit of a problem. Physically, the card itself remains unchanged, but the fan, which moves the


air across the copper, is larger but slower moving. While still audible on an uncased testbed, the board proved almost inaudible inside our reference ATC-210 with moderate sound levels.

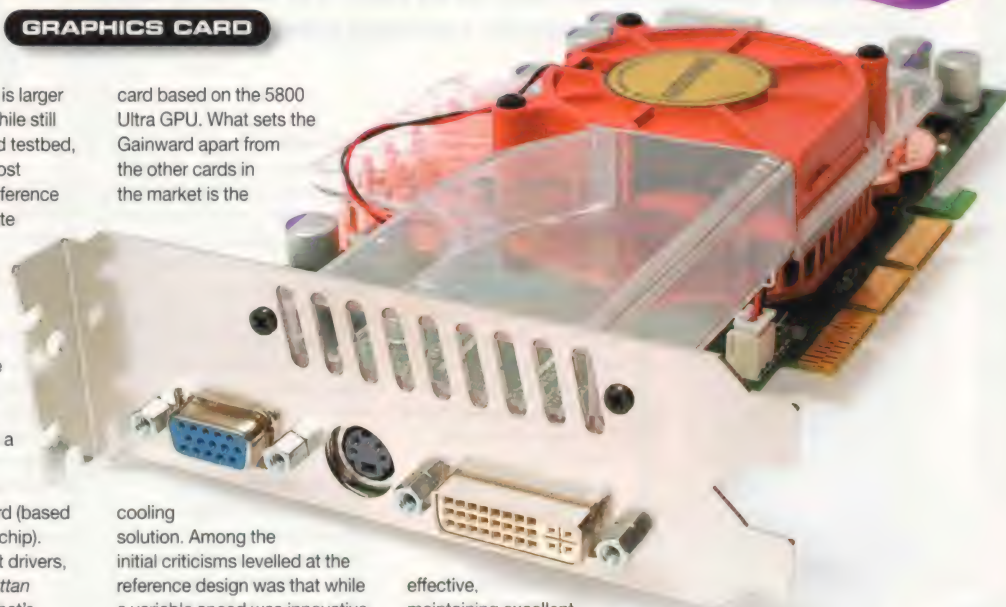
Not one to just stick a card and a driver disc in the box, Gainward has gone to town this time around with all of the usual DVI dongle and VIVO leads, as well as a PCI firewire card, headphones and 5.1 channel PCI soundcard (based on the C-Media 8738 chip). Software-wise you get drivers, *Duke Nukem - Manhattan Project* (hardly a title that's going to show off your new board) and Intervideo's excellent WinCinema.

Ultimately, the performance of the Gainward FX Powerpack 1000 is identical to any other

card based on the 5800 Ultra GPU. What sets the Gainward apart from the other cards in the market is the

cooling solution. Among the initial criticisms levelled at the reference design was that while a variable speed was innovative, the maximum performance noise level was intolerable. Well, Gainward has taken this on board and answered with a unique four leaf clover design that is as striking as it is

effective, maintaining excellent cooling along side a 10db drop in the overall noise level. For this reason it goes into our Best Performance slot in the Buyer's Guide. If you have the cash, then go forth and buy. 



**PCZONE VERDICT** **88**  
Silent and deadly

# 3D PROPHET RADEON 9500 PRO

■ Price: £189 | Manufacturer: Hercules | Phone: 0208 665 1881 | [www.europe.hercules.com](http://www.europe.hercules.com)

**ATI is still pumping out the cards, but the 9500 Pro has just missed the boat**

**GRAPHICS CARD**

**WE ALL** want the very best, fastest, most cutting edge hardware for our PCs. Let's face it, no-one sets out to own the second-fastest video card. But the reality putting a damper on this lust for a lot of people is cash - we can't afford to upgrade every time a manufacturer decides to pump out some new silicon. Which is why it's important to keep track of mainstream offerings like the new Radeon 9500 Pro.

The Hercules 3D Prophet 9500 promises to deliver much of the pixel-pushing power of its superb sibling, the 9700 Pro (previous PC Zone Best Performance Graphics Card), but at a substantially lower price. Indeed, there are many similarities between the two cards - both have DVI and VIVO connectors, and both utilise the R300 core, although the 9500 Pro has its at the more modest setting of 275Mhz.

Also experiencing a shrinking sensation is the board's memory bandwidth. Where the 9700 Pro had 4x64bit memory controllers, the 9500 Pro is downsized by 50% with only 2x64bit - putting it on a technological par with the Geforce4 Ti family. Hercules offers its Prophet 9500 Pro with 128Mb of DDR memory running at 540 Mhz, most significant because in many circumstances memory bandwidth has proven to be one of the most common bottlenecks for the DX9 R9X00 family.


In a signature move for Hercules, the card comes complete with a striking blue PCB, ramsinks and radial cooler. The bundle includes PowerDVD 4.0XP and 3deep colour calibration software.

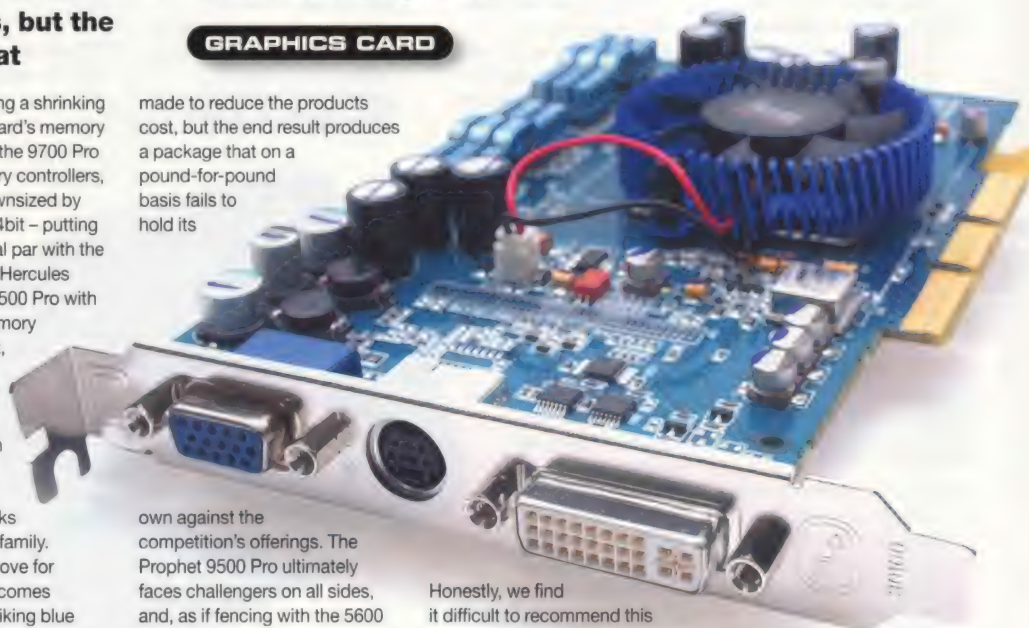
Arguably, the minimal bundle and hardware changes had to be

made to reduce the products cost, but the end result produces a package that on a pound-for-pound basis fails to hold its

own against the competition's offerings. The Prophet 9500 Pro ultimately faces challengers on all sides, and, as if fencing with the 5600 wasn't enough, ATI has already announced the 9500's successor, the 9600, which is making big promises.

So the big question: should you wait or invest now?

Honestly, we find it difficult to recommend this particular member of the Hercules family so late in the day. With new chips due from both sides in this price range, it would probably be worth holding off on any purchase. 



**PCZONE VERDICT** **72**  
Cheap, but not so cheery



# GADGETS

More money than you know what to do with? Let us help, with a selection of the coolest gadgets currently doing the rounds



## P800

**PRICE** £349.99 (on contract)  
**MANUFACTURER** Sony Ericsson  
**PHONE** 0500 80 20 80  
**WEB** www.sonyericsson.com

Do you remember the days when you just used your mobile to find out which pubs your mates were in? Now you've got colour screens, Internet access, multimedia messaging and PDA-level functionality. And, of course, intensely annoying polyphonic ringtones bursting out from every orifice.

After being so impressed with the SPV from Orange, we thought there was little room for any significant

improvement this year – which of course meant we were proved wrong within a matter of weeks by the P800 from Sony Ericsson.

Picture messaging with the in-built camera, a full HTML web browser, email client, media player – it offers everything the SPV does, and when you flip down the keypad, you get a large stylus-friendly touch-sensitive display, probably the most important feature of any PDA/mobile crossover.

The supplied software is excellent, with a couple of 3D games (*Men In Black II* and *Stunt Run*) plus a PacketVideo client to stream live video. Who needs pubs or mates?

**PCZONE VERDICT** 93

## DEFCON AUTHENTICATOR

**PRICE** USB: £110  
 PCMCIA: £140  
**MANUFACTURER** Targus  
**PHONE** 0208 607 7000  
**WEB** www.targus.com

Passwords are a pain in the butt – you can either take the lazy route and use the same one

for absolutely everything, in which case you're risking getting hacked by a simpleton, or use various combos and end up forgetting your log-in for everything and having to start all over again.

There is another option, and it's straight out of the future – biometrics. Using a combination of software and a biometric fingerprint reader, the DEFCON Authenticator manages everything from your windows log-in, to automating your

e-banking, numerous forum accounts, email, instant messenger and just about anything else which uses a password dialog box.

We tried various methods to try and fool the Authenticator but it passed every one. Probably the only way round it is if someone chops your finger off, which is quite an extreme way of hacking into your PC.

**PCZONE VERDICT** 85



## CYBERSHOT U-20

**PRICE** £199.95  
**MANUFACTURER** Sony  
**PHONE** 0207 365 2947  
**WEB** www.sony.co.uk

It's sad to think that even today, many digital cameras under £200 are generally either huge great things, or lack key features such as red-eye reduction, an LCD viewfinder, a flash or a decent CCD. Thankfully, Sony seems to be as pissed off about the situation as us, and is determined to turn the situation around with the compact and feature-filled Cybershot U-20.

Using conventional Memory Sticks, the camera supports media up to 128Mb (8Mb supplied as standard) which at the maximum optical resolution of 2MP (1632x1224), means more than 225 shots.

The only area in which the U-20 lacks is in any ability to zoom, instead offering a fixed frame and intelligent autofocus (with a permanent LCD viewfinder). But, for what ultimately amounts to a 'point and shoot' camera, that's probably no bad thing, and

whether it's for nights out to remember or occasional use, this is one of the best on the market.

**PCZONE VERDICT** 87



## BLUETOOTH WIRELESS HEADSET

**PRICE** £77  
**MANUFACTURER** Belkin  
**PHONE** 01933 35 2000  
**WEB** www.belkin.co.uk

The problem with the coolest gadgets, such as the teeny BlueSpooon headset (see bottom right, opposite), is they cost a lot of money. If you want a Bluetooth headset weighing under 10g, you've little choice but to stump up more than £200. For the rest of us mere mortals, there are

devices such as the Bluetooth Wireless Headset from Belkin.

Using a single-chip Bluetooth solution and using more mainstream components, the device is much larger than the BlueSpooon, but still comfortable and light enough to wear for extended periods. Aside from that it does the job as well as the BlueSpooon. The only question to ask yourself is, how rich do you feel this month?

**PCZONE VERDICT** 75



## 10-IN-1

**PRICE** £24.95  
**MANUFACTURER** Atari Classics  
**PHONE** Firebox – 0870 241 4289  
**WEB** www.firebox.com

If you're anywhere around the ripe old age of 30, you'll remember the feeling you got when you were given your first Atari console. *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids* and *Missile Command* in your own home – all without having to pay 10p a pop.

Even though the hardware's probably been consigned to the bin now, you can still enjoy all the old 'classics' (bar *Space Invaders*, unfortunately, but with *Asteroids*, *Adventure*, *Missile Command*, *Centipede*, *Gravitar*, *Yar's Revenge*, *Breakout*, *Pong*, *Circus Atari* and *Real Sports Volleyball*) as the entire shebang has been transported into an old Atari joystick. Stick four AA batteries in, plug it into your TV and enjoy for, oh, at least 20 minutes (that's right – no PC required). If you'd rather keep your rose-tinted memories alive, it's probably worth giving it a miss, but for something to show your grandchildren ("When I was a lad this is all we had!") you can't go wrong, and at £25 it's a most reasonably priced slice of gaming history.

**PCZONE VERDICT** 72



## INTERACTIVE JEDI TRAINING LIGHTSABER

**PRICE** £49.95  
**MANUFACTURER** Hasbro  
**PHONE** Firebox - 0870 241 4289  
**WEB** www.firebox.com

Since the first signs of *Star Wars Galaxies*, wannabe Obi-Wans have been springing up everywhere. But with the recent news of delays, you're going to have to wait a little longer before you can wield that lightsaber in a virtual online world. So now is as good a time as any to irritate your friends and family with the next best thing.

Nearly 1m in length, the chosen weapon of Qui-Gon Jinn and

Yoda switches on with the entry of a secret Jedi code of your own choosing, and makes all the appropriate noises as you swoosh it through the air and lock weapons with your foe.

The perfect duelling weapon to settle arguments in the PCZ offices, or merely a brilliant way of annoying our editor who thinks that *Star Wars*

should be consigned to the dustbin? Only time will tell.

**PCZONE VERDICT 73**



## TWINX

**PRICE** 512Mb - £120  
 1Gb - £220  
**MANUFACTURER** Corsair  
**PHONE** n/a  
**WEB** www.corsairmemory.com

Gone are the days of buying a PC with 16Mb of RAM and never having to worry about it ever again. With today's high-speed processors and graphics cards

that cost about as much as everything else put together, a decent slice of RAM is essential for top performance.

TWINX might sound like two sticks of chocolate, but it's actually matched sticks of memory which will help you

squeeze out every ounce of performance from a Dual-Channel DDR chipset such as the nForce2, E7205 'Granite Bay' or the new i875 'Canterwood' announced by Intel this month (see page 101 for more information).

Providing double the bandwidth of single-channel DDR, these 400MHz memories will run at all but the most ruthless timings, and are now one of the key components of our new test rig. Buy if you've got the right platform for it.

**PCZONE VERDICT 88**



## SGH-S100

**PRICE** £69.99 (on contract)  
**MANUFACTURER** Samsung  
**PHONE** n/a  
**WEB** www.samsung.com

The P800 might represent the pinnacle of geeky-gadgetry in the world of mobile phones, but there are probably plenty of you who want something a little less in-your-face. Which is precisely where handsets such as the SGH-S100 from Samsung come in.

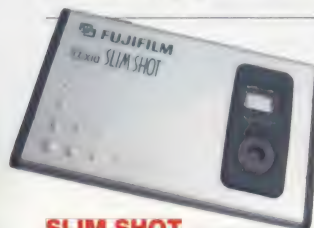
Based on the classic clamshell design pioneered by Motorola, the phone might lack a touch screen and a camera, but aside from that, pretty much all the bases have been covered with decent GPRS support, a colour display, polyphonic sounds, Java game support and caller ID on the top of the exterior. The helpful chaps at Samsung have even included a spare battery, so thin you can stick it in your wallet and get it out when you're in an emergency.

WAP might not be to everyone's taste - it certainly hasn't taken off as the



manufacturers and networks hoped - but for downloading games and checking the latest footy scores, the SGH-S100 does the job admirably.

**PCZONE VERDICT 82**



## SLIM SHOT

**PRICE** £79.95  
**MANUFACTURER** Fuji  
**PHONE** Firebox - 0870 241 4289  
**WEB** www.firebox.com

It's not often that we get a gadget in the pages of ZONE

that is a current entrant in the *Guinness Book Of Records* - the closest we've come so far is a picture of Chris Akabusi grinning like a loon - but we've finally cracked it.

The Slim Shot, as the name suggests, is the world's thinnest digital camera. To give you some idea, it's around 6mm thick, meaning you can literally stuff it in your wallet and carry it around with your condoms. Should you be sexually active.

The 8Mb of embedded flash memory is enough for around 26 VGA snaps (640x480) - though it can take more than 100 photos at QVGA (320x240). The limited resolutions mean that it's not one for real camera aficionados, especially considering the lack of a flash, but then the Slim Shot is designed to be as small as possible - and for that it does exactly what it says on the tin.

**PCZONE VERDICT 68**

## FLIKLITE

**PRICE** £29.95  
**MANUFACTURER** EFX  
**PHONE** Firebox - 0870 241 4289  
**WEB** www.firebox.com

Five years ago, our PCs all lived in huge spacious steel cases which weighed an absolute ton. But at least upgrades were a relatively painless process, discounting all the cuts associated with their sharp steel corners. Today, with most PCs coming in a mini-

tower or smaller, and with more hardware than ever before, simple tasks like just getting a quick squizz at your



motherboard can be a chore. Based on the same LED technology seen in those annoying

little keyring torches everyone was running around with a couple of years ago, the FlikLite is a geek's best friend. Switching on with a simple flick of the wrist, the torch uses four high-power LEDs driven by three N-sized batteries to let you see into the darkest corners of your PC. It's made of aircraft-grade aluminium and it's waterproof to about 30m, for some reason.

**PCZONE VERDICT 82**

## BLUESPOON PANTHER EDITION

**PRICE** £211.50  
**MANUFACTURER** NextLink  
**PHONE** 0161 868 0868  
**WEB** www.nextlink.to

Bluetooth was apparently voted one of the biggest white-elephant technologies of last

year, with many manufacturers using it as little more than a gimmick to shift a few more boxes. But less than half-way through 2003 and things seem to be picking up, with devices like the BlueSpoon from NextLink.

At less than 10g, the BlueSpoon is the smallest,

lightest Bluetooth headset money can buy. No larger than a walnut, it latches into your right ear with a small flexible arm and, contrary to what many think, the technology works with more than just mobile phones.

With a Bluetooth dongle in your PC it's possible to pipe

sound to and from a Bluetooth headset - giving you the smallest, most discrete gaming headset imaginable. Coupled with a totally wireless Bluetooth desktop, you can say goodbye to tangled leads forever.

**PCZONE VERDICT 88**





# PALMBUTLER 3000

■ Price: £195 | Manufacturer: HomeLinc A/S | Phone: 0045 70 70 17 17 | [www.palmbutler.com](http://www.palmbutler.com)

**AV DEVICE**



**Apparently if you sit on your hand for a few minutes and... (Stop that right now. It's not that kind of Palmbutler! – Ed)**

**THE** Internet has pretty much come of age, especially if you're kitted out with broadband, and you can collaborate, discuss and share just about anything with your peers, from paranoid ideas about government conspiracies and cover-ups to slightly dodgier material like commercial audio and video files. And while it's fair to say that, despite the issues of legality, many of you will have dabbled with MP3s, SVCDs and

DIVX films, the sad truth is that if you're piping them through your PC you're much better off buying the original.

Or at least you were. Now, thanks to the brilliantly named Palmbutler, any material you have regardless of obscure codec, quality or moral decency can make it on to your TV. In fact, if you're adventurous enough to wire the Palmbutler into your main aerial you can receive it on every TV or radio in the house.

There are two versions to choose from – the 3000 and the 1500. The 1500 is simply a radio remote for controlling your PC with no provision for outputting the display anywhere other than your monitor. The 3000 takes the solution a stage further and adds the ability to broadcast radio on a user defined frequency and narrowcast video on a channel of your choice.

#### WHAT THE BUTLER SAW

Thanks to the joys of RealAudio/RealPlayer, you have access to a constantly updated selection of movie trailers, which serve as an excellent demonstration of the product's potential flexibility, but

we think the feature that will have you returning to the Palmbutler time and time again is the Internet Radio and Web TV. Being able to tune into networks like The Bible Network is enough to keep us in stitches for hours.

It's easy to set up, requiring the connection of sound and video sources from your PC and input via a serial port. After installing the software and devices all that remains is to find an unoccupied frequency to broadcast through, and once

now you have to do it manually.

If you manage to do this without electrocuting yourself, the image and sound quality isn't bad for an RF-based signal. The only gripe we had was that the software doesn't use any form of content labelling like ID3, which reads the genre and automatically allows you to create custom playlists, meaning you'll have to catalogue your collection carefully to make it easier to navigate.

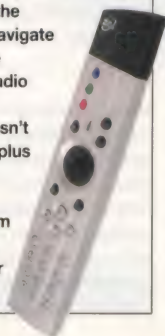
#### PORN

But as with any decent A/V gadget, once you've installed and tweaked to your tastes, the real magic begins. We really can't over emphasise the impact of

#### ANYTIME, ANYPLACE ANYWHERE

**THE REAL BEAUTY OF THE PALMBUTLER IS THE RADIO REMOTE. NO WE'RE NOT ÜBER-GEEKS, LET US EXPLAIN...**

On the face of it, the HomeLinc Palmbutler might seem to offer little over your standard PC equipped with a TV out, but it actually has a raft of additional features. Most striking is the product's Radio Remote, which enables you to navigate your way around a stylish interface not unlike the environment of SKY+ Digital, from anywhere in radio range, rather than needing line of sight like a conventional IR remote. This means your PC doesn't need to be in the same room, which is a big, big, plus point. The interaction with the PC is handled flawlessly and navigating the unit's menus is responsive and easy. Within the UI you can stream video off the Internet, review your digital holiday snaps, watch your DIVX movies and listen to your tunes plus a selection of Internet radio stations.



**"The feature that will have you returning to the Palmbutler time and time again is the Internet Radio and Web TV"**

you've hooked into the aerial you're ready to go. Which is where the only problem could arise. Depending on how and where you set it up, you might find yourself cracking out a drill and masonry bit to hook into your antennae or failing that directly to a TV of your choice. Hopefully, in the future, HomeLinc will offer a wireless option, but for

watching a streamed video straight off the Net piped directly on to your living room TV. It's stunning and the sort of thing the Internet was built for. **PCZ**

**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**88**

**An excellent gadget  
with real longevity**



# DP-450

DVD PLAYER

■ Price: £225 | Manufacturer: KiSS Technology | Phone: N/A  
[www.kiss-technology.com](http://www.kiss-technology.com)

**It's a DVD player, but not as we know it...**

**NAMES** are important. Spend your school life labouring under the weighty handicap of Hector Smeethes-Smegly and you're going to end up hating your parents and probably inflicting an even worse moniker on your newborns. So you've got to feel for Ogg Vorbis, which sounds more like the name of a character from the latest Harry Potter novel than a new open-source media format.

New media formats have more than that to worry about, though. For one, it takes a huge amount of work to code support into entertainment devices, and then there's the legion of users, like you, who'll have to re-compress (or even worse, re-rip) your entire music collection (in many cases upwards of 20Gb). What this means is that initially adopted formats such as MP3

prevail – even Microsoft's WMA plays second fiddle to the format, and it's rare that the beast will ever be happy in second place.

## DIVVY

The story's the same with digital video compression formats. Born at a time when DVD was still an extremely expensive solution, DivX offered most of the benefits (improved audio and visual quality over VHS in 1/5th the storage requirements of DVD) and a load of you are going to have a huge collection of films and other DivX media which you've had to watch on your PC until now.

Thankfully, the times they are a-changin', with DivX finally reaching the critical mass needed to push a niche format to the mainstream and support for the MPEG-4 standard being

built into dedicated A/V units. The DP-450 is the first we've seen that does this, and it's pretty damn good.

In essence it's a DVD player with excellent connectivity – Scart, Composite and S-Video outputs for pictures, and Optical, Coax and Stereo Phono for audio – meaning the unit can be plumbed directly into most modern TVs and amplifiers.

Another benefit is that it's upgradeable. Unlike static formats such as VCD, one of the other key benefits of DivX is that the standard is continually being tweaked and updated. To keep up with the advances (and better still, to add support for new types of media) you can easily update the software of the DP-450 by downloading the files onto your PC, burning them onto a CD and transferring it into your player.

At the time of our review the DP-450 supports DivX 4/5 & XviD (and Ogg Vorbis!), but by the time you read this a new update should be available which will hopefully kill off a couple of persistent bugs and add support for the holy grail of DivX – version 3.11, probably the most widespread release to date. Check out the KiSS website for the latest information on this one.

## JACK OF ALL TRADES

We decided to throw a selection of media at the player to test its mettle and we were pretty impressed. DVD, VCD and SVCDs played without a hitch; DivX was equally as painless, although you have to use the built-in browser to select the desired media when multiple files are present on a disc. The only thing we found it didn't like

was non-ISO media (90 minute discs), but 80-minute over-burned CDRs worked fine.

The price is good too: at around £225, the DP-450 offers all the features of a mainstream DVD player, with the added benefit of mass media support, meaning it's currently one of a kind. It might lack the versatility of the PalmButler (opposite), but for a mere £30 more than HomeLinc's unit, it provides a standalone solution with superior picture quality and true surround sound – essential if you're serious about films. A one-stop shop for all your media needs. **PCZ**

**PCZONE  
VERDICT**

**91**

**An affordable, quality  
media player that's  
one of a kind**

**"A standalone solution with superior  
picture quality and true surround sound"**



## YES IT PLAYS DVDS...

...but the real beauty of the DP-450 is that it supports almost anything you might have downloaded on your PC.

**Features:** Progressive Scan, Photo Album, Dolby Digital, DTS, MPEG 5.1  
**Supported Media:** CD/CD-R/CD-RW/HD/CD/DVD/DVD-RW  
**Supported Formats:** DVD/CD/AVCD/SVCD/Photo-CD/DivX 4/5 (MPEG-4)/XVID/MP3/OGG VORBIS/WMA/JPEG





# DEAR WANDY

**A glut of video card problems means a glut of video card letters and a video card top tip. Can Wandy make every one see straight again?**

■ **QUACK:** Phil Wand

## LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type thing.

**Write to** Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

**Email** Address your letters to us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk) with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

## GOT THE JITTERS

**Q** When I play *Grand Theft Auto III* on my 1.7GHz Pentium 4, I suffer from an annoying 'jumping' effect when driving. I have 512Mb RAM and a GeForce4 MX440 graphics card and although the game is playable it's extremely aggravating that things are not smoother. I've tried all manner of settings to see if it makes any difference and it doesn't. I've tried running the game at 800x600 and at 640x480 and it continues jumping as though it were at 1024x768. I've also tried to change some of the settings to the NVIDIA options in the Display control panel, but this only serves to make things worse and I've concluded that it must be the card and not the processor. That said, I get to play many other games without a single problem (although I had to tone down the settings for Mafia). Do I simply need to upgrade my graphics card or is my CPU slowing things down? I only built this PC about a year ago and as you might imagine I don't want to spend much more money. Do you have any suggestions of what I should purchase at around the £100 mark?

Jeff Mitchell

**A** You have the memory and the processor for the gig but that MX440 is a eunuch. OK, so the problem you described may be down to botched drivers on a bloated install of Windows, or because you've inadvertently switched on blurring in *Grand Theft Auto's* video options (keep it off), but it's more likely that your graphics card simply isn't man enough for the job. The GeForce4 MX440 is value for money, but not a lot else – while DirectX 8 compatible it isn't actually DirectX 8 compliant, and, to cut a long story short, it's down on features and will benchmark slower than a GeForce3. If you have £100 burning a hole in

your pocket my advice would be to go for something like the Asus GeForce4 Ti4200 or the Connect3D Radeon 9500 – as you'll see elsewhere on this page I've been having a lot of success recently with ATI products and feel happy about recommending them once again. You could also keep an eye on eBay for an older GeForce3 Ti500 card as a means of getting a little extra thrust, because with these cards now obsolete people have assumed there ain't a lot of point to owning one. Tell that to an MX440 owner! Bidding on a GeForce3 Ti200 starts at around £5 and there's seldom a reserve, and once the card is installed some gentle overclocking will see about 25 per cent more thrust from it. You could then keep the £100 in your bank and save up for a real monster in time for summer.

## OLD AGE TENSION

**Q** I am 45 years old and I play PC games, but I've got a problem. I would like to reinstall some old favourites but when I try, the CD drive whirrs and clicks but nowt happens. Looking in My Computer shows no disc in the drive. What, oh enlightened one, could cause such a fatality? This isn't the case with my entire game library, just a few lonely old



Some CDs are best left scratched.

**Shhh! XP is having a nap and doesn't want to be disturbed.**



age items, like me, awaiting rebirth. I would consider it an honour if you could accommodate.

Colin Bowerman.

**A** Sounds as though those veteran games have won themselves a few battle scars. Modern CD drives run at such a hefty pace that they often have to hit the brakes to read a less than perfect disc – when you hear it speed up then wind down it's effectively having a closer look – and given enough scratches it'll eventually give up trying. It could be that the CD is slightly warped or that the central hole has become enlarged or its edges cracked. Modern devices check for vibration from a warped or damaged disc – it'll shake the shit out of the mechanism when travelling at speed – and subsequently won't spin up properly. You could try and find yourself a much older, slower CD-ROM drive and have another go, or use a tiny amount of metal polish, brushing out from the centre of the disc, on the shiny side to see if that helps smooth over any imperfections.

## WAIT OFF YOUR MIND

**Q** I have a problem with my computer – it boots up very slowly, taking around five minutes to get the computer

running. I used to use Windows 98 and that took 30 seconds to boot and now I'm using XP it takes far, far longer. Can you tell me some things to change in the BIOS settings to improve booting up? My specifications are AMD Athlon XP 1800+, GeForce2 MX400, 384Mb RAM, and Sound Blaster 128.

Anon

**A** There is something very wrong with your install and I'd advise redoing everything from scratch. It could be that your hard drive is on its way out, or that your primary partition has no bytes free on it, but even then I would expect you to list out a bunch of errors rather than the whole system just taking an age to get going. Is it similarly retarded once you've arrived at your desktop? I'd check the log in the Event Viewer and see if there are any urgent errors or warnings that are reported during every startup. Failing that, backup your data, reformat your hard drive and start over – one of the few things I like about XP (aside from the fact that, with a few tweaks, you can make it look and behave like 2000) is the way it starts up in two shakes of a lamb's tail. My Pentium 4 3.06HT machine takes less than 20 seconds to reach Windows from cold – five minutes is a joke!

**"One of the few things I like about XP is the way it starts up in two shakes of a lamb's tail"**



## "Like you, I don't want to be farting about in the Add New Hardware control panel at 2.15am"

### CPU OR CARD?

**Q** I'm looking for some advice on upgrades. I currently have a self-built PIII 866, 256Mb RAM and a GeForce2 Pro. My dilemma is whether to beef up my graphics card or processor – if I opt for a new CPU I'll also need to invest in a new motherboard, case and memory. I've noticed some recent games, such as *Splinter Cell* and *Unreal Tournament 2003*, require at least 1GHz CPUs to run at a decent lick, yet I can still play games such as *Medal Of Honor* and *No One Lives Forever 2* with decent levels of detail turned on. I was wondering if a top-of-the-range graphics card would give me the desired performance increase until I can afford a new CPU. I would be grateful for any advice you can give.

R Bamborough

**A** The weakest link in the Wandy line-up is a PIII 800MHz system with 384Mb RAM and a GeForce3 Ti200. It runs both *Unreal Tournament 2003* and *Battlefield 1942* on low detail at 800x600 without a hiccup but the moment you crank up the resolution or get optimistic with texture settings it turns into a wheezing fat boy waving a note from its mum. So what you do depends on how happy you are with sub-par graphics and a lower resolution as trade-offs for fluid gaming – if you don't mind losing quality for a bigger frame rate then it's pretty obvious you should do that and keep the cash in your piggy bank. But if you're desperate for some bells and whistles then I'd smash the pig and get the card first, spending between £120 and £140, and if that don't get you to where you wanted to be you can always update the processor as a second step – together with the upgraded graphics you're sure to be impressed. As is so often the

Sad this,  
I'm off!  
Lae Portum.

case, it's all down to the games you play and your expectations of them.

### ATI TURNABOUT

**Q** I'm about to purchase a new PC with an ATI Radeon 9500 video card. However, after your comments regarding driver problems with the Radeon 9700 in Issue 126 I am somewhat put off. I am buying the kit mainly

size of my butt. ATI cards had me hosing time on so many occasions that I reached a point where I couldn't be bothered with them any more, but on a whim I found myself buying a Radeon 9700 Pro, and you know what? I'm more than happy to report that my shiny new ATI card combined with the most recent Catalyst drivers has not had a single problem. As part of its initiation I've revisited all my most graphically intensive games and none of them



The 9700 Pro dropped jaws at Wandy HQ, and it's not even ATI's fastest card. What will the 9800 be like?

for gaming and thought the card would hold me in good stead for a few years. Is it just the case that I will have to download drivers for some new games or is it more complicated than that?

T Adams

**A** I research, compare prices, buy and install my own kit with Wandy dollars from the Wandy bank. I have no allegiance with any manufacturer, so what you read here is based on experience with genuine retail products. My criteria for a graphics card has never changed – I want it to be fast, reliable and not too expensive; like you, I don't want to be farting about in the Add New Hardware control panel at 2.15am, wondering why the icons on my desktop are the

have caused it to wimp out or lock up. *Battlefield 1942* is like being there, so elaborate and fluid are the textures. *Unreal Tournament 2003* could do with more detail settings so I can max out the sliders and watch the Radeon dismiss them with unwavering composure. As for *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002 Professional Edition*, that's for nerds. I've been so impressed with the 9700 Pro that I've invested in a 9500 for another machine and can't wait to try the 9800. NVIDIA hardware still outnumbers ATI hardware at Wandy towers, but I can't help feeling the balance is tipping.

Visit Dear Wandy online at [www.dearwandy.com](http://www.dearwandy.com)

## WANDY'S TOP TIP

### OVERCLOCKING YOUR VIDEO CARD

Getting a little 'extra thrust' from your video is hardly something new, but from the letters I receive it would appear that few people know the procedure. It doesn't involve screwdrivers or scraped knuckles – all you need is the right software, a little patience and anyone can turbocharge a modern graphics card without getting out of their chair. A warning before we go further, though. YOU are responsible for tweaking your hardware, not us. As long as you ensure that the changes you make are gradual, and that the cooling you have inside your PC is more than sufficient, it's unlikely anything will go wrong. But if you're at all worried, the answer is simple: DON'T DO IT.

### NVIDIA HARDWARE

The GeForce people have something called NvTweak for clocking their hardware but by default they keep it hidden from you. To enable it, you need to be running Detonator drivers then merge values from a special registry file into your Windows registry. To do this, browse to [www.dearwandy.com/showthread.php?threadid=359](http://www.dearwandy.com/showthread.php?threadid=359) and download



A simple registry tweak gives you an official overclocking tab.

coolbits.reg from the first post – double-click to merge and you're almost done. Right-click on your desktop, choose Properties, Settings, Advanced, then select the tab bearing the name of your card. Hey presto! The Clock Frequencies section is showing. Put a tick in the Allow Adjustments checkbox, then make very gradual changes to the settings, rebooting and testing at each increment. You'll see best results from upping the memory clock settings and changes here should be reflected instantly in any benchmarks you run.

### ATI HARDWARE

To tweak your Radeon requires third-party software – unlike NVIDIA, ATI do not provide any official utilities, hidden or otherwise. The one I prefer is called Rage3D Tweak and is freely downloadable from [www.rage3d.com](http://www.rage3d.com). My advice would be to put a tick in the Nothing checkbox when prompted to choose a skin during installation – it'll make the program's dreadful interface be a little more bearable. Select the Overclocker tab and try 10MHz increments. Unlike the NVIDIA solution, no compatibility testing is done at this stage, so you'll need to run a heavy-duty benchmark to make sure it still works. As with most video cards, tweaking the memory clock will yield the most noticeable results. Once you've reached the stage where your games are obviously faster but just as stable, it's only natural you'll want to push harder still. So watch out for signs that you've gone too far: these include but are not limited to screen tearing, noise and freezing. If these symptoms make an appearance, be sure to put things back as they were.



Want to turn your 9700 Pro into an FX-beater? Try Rage3D Tweak.

Send in your Top Tip to Dear Wandy and win yourself £50.





# WATCHDOG

Teeth bared. Eyes narrowed. Fists clenched. Meet the latest hacked-off consumers. Dodgy companies should look away now...

■ WRITING THE WRONGS Adam Phillips

## ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you have a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

**WRITE TO** Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

**EMAIL** Alternatively, email us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk) with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

## READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

## A VERY CREATIVE CONSPIRACY

There's nothing like a good conspiracy theory and reader Howard Sargent reckons he's stumbled across one perpetrated by those cloak 'n' dagger types at Creative Labs. According to Howard, the company has been trying to hide a serious defect with its Inspire 6700 speaker set. "The problem itself lies with the included power supply adaptor," says Howard. "After using the speakers for two weeks, they start to produce loud bangs. These start off every 15 minutes or so and then the interval between bangs gets shorter the more you use them."

On hearing these complaints from various punters, Creative Labs posted an official statement on its forum late last year, explaining that it was a problem with the power supply units and how it can affect certain speakers. It said it would send out replacement PSUs to those customers who have been affected.

Our Howard did eventually receive a replacement PSU and all seemed well. For him at least. But he reckons that, for some users, the new PSU has not fixed the popping and the problem still remains.

"I seem to be the only one who has had the problem fixed with the new PSU, judging from the forum," says Howard. "The most annoying thing about all this is that Creative has said nothing about it on its website or made any effort to remove the products from the shops. It would seem logical to recall them as this problem affects every supplied PSU with the Inspire 6700s."

So is Creative Labs hiding the truth from customers and the press? Is this a corporate conspiracy of *Deus Ex*-like proportions? Indeed, was it on the grassy knoll on November 22, 1963? Over to the alleged conspirators...

"As you can appreciate, it takes a certain time to

diagnose a problem with a new product, but we are confident that the 'popping' is apparent with only a small batch of units and not all Inspire 6700s," 'confesses' a Creative Labs spokesperson. "As the problem does not present any danger, a recall was thought unnecessary."

It has 'managed' the situation and has now

the way that they are handling this situation now and everyone finally seems to be getting sorted out."

So all seems well – or has Howard just been 'gotten to' by the Illuminati? But if there is anyone out there who is still experiencing similar problems, do let Creative Labs (and us) know. The CIA is watching...

## "Creative has said nothing about the problem on its website or removed the product from the shops"

**HOWARD SARGENT**  
BELIEVES CREATIVE LABS IS HIDING THE TRUTH

resolved the issue. It believes the majority of units with the 'popping' problem have been sorted. "We posted a clear message on our forums regarding this issue with a request that customers experiencing these symptoms contact technical support," states Creative Labs.

In the meantime, Howard has changed his tune according to a forum message he posted in February. An excerpt reads: "I must say that I am impressed with

## SHORT AND SWEET

Simple really. Mike Kirk bought a network server from E-Buyer, but it died a death five weeks later. "The company tested it and confirmed it was faulty," explains Mike. "They said they would supply a replacement under warranty."

Trouble is, this was two months ago and his replacement still hasn't arrived. And due to the age of the equipment, there's no chance of getting his money back either. "I have since emailed them a few times

requesting that, since they won't refund me, they either provide me with an equivalent model print server or hurry up and get my one in stock," says Mike. "These emails have been ignored. Please help."

From the sounds of it, E-Buyer had actually resolved this issue before we dropped them a line. "Mr Kirk's complaint has been dealt with – he was refunded on order," states a company spokesperson. "If he had contacted E-Buyer, we would have explained to him and let him know what was happening with his returned goods."

Absolutely, but the bottom line is that he did try and contact you but says that you ignored his emails. We know that feeling.

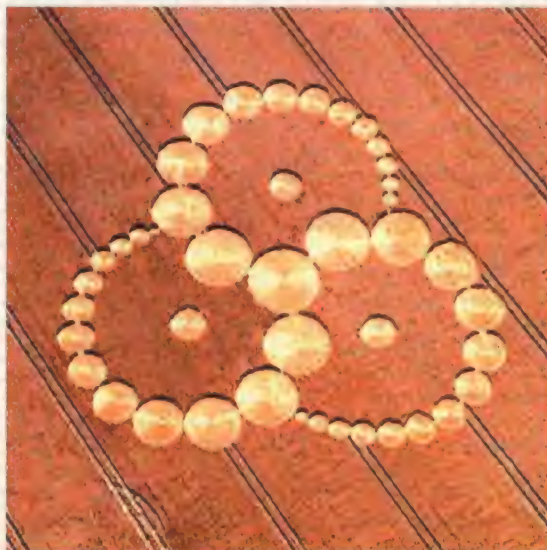
## I EXIST!

When are you a customer but not a customer? When you try and upgrade your NTL broadband service. Reader Simon Martyr tried to switch from his 512Kbps speed service to a 1Mb one, but discovered that there was no record of him on NTL's database – even though he is being charged for the service and has been using NTL for the last six months.

"How can I not be registered? I'm certainly on all the other databases that they have – especially the ones that send out the bills," ponders Simon. "I've tried calling, but I have the usual two-hour wait for cable modem tech support. When I finally get through, I get a chorus of, 'I'm sorry, sir, you don't appear to have registered'."

Poor old Simon seems to have hit a brick wall with this one. NTL got back to us and apologised for the inconvenience caused to you by its database problem. "We are working flat out to investigate the problems he has been experiencing," says a spokesperson.

By the time you read this, Simon, you should finally exist



Is Creative Labs responsible for crop circles as well?

**THE ACCUSED**


**GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT**





**Ben opened the cardboard box containing his repaired Mesh PC, only to find something amiss...**

in the eyes of NTL and be running on a much faster broadband service.

#### WHAT A MESH?

There's plenty of finger pointing going on in this month's Watchdog, but sometimes, it's not clear who should be pointing the finger at whom. Take reader Ben Franklin. He bought a Mesh PC back in late 2001. The PC packed up a year later and he was told by Mesh to send it back.

"After three weeks, it was finally returned in working condition," explains Ben. "Out of interest, I thought I'd take a look inside to see what they had done. It was a good job I did."

You see, when Ben first bought his PC, it contained a GeForce 2MX and, to keep up to date, he decided to buy a GeForce 4Ti in June 2002, which cost some £230. Poking round inside his fixed PC, though, Ben realised that this new card had been taken out and replaced with an original GeForce 2MX.

"I wouldn't have minded so much, but they hadn't sent back my practically brand new card for me to return to be fixed/changed by the manufacturer," fumes Ben. "On a roughly written customer support receipt shipped with the PC, I was able to make out that the motherboard and card had indeed been replaced."

Highly annoyed, he contacted Mesh Support again to find out what was going on. "They told me the graphics card was faulty so that they had replaced it," states Ben. "They also said that they hadn't realised it was a different graphics card, and that was why they hadn't returned it."

He asked for it back and after some pressure, it agreed "but said that would be pointless as I wouldn't be able to use it as it didn't work", recalls Ben.

"However, when my card was returned, it unsurprisingly worked 100 per cent fine."

Ben says that the most frustrating thing about the experience was the amount of time he had to spend pressurising Mesh on "their costly phone line to find and return my perfectly fine graphics card".

**Well, Mesh says that you did not make it clear that you had installed a different graphics card. When it discovered a fault, the engineer automatically requested a replacement graphics card based on the original system serial number.**

**The whole thing was put back together and sent back to you. Your faulty card was then inadvertently sent back to Mesh's suppliers to be fixed. "We then had a situation where the customer rang us and said that we had to send a significantly more expensive card than the one originally purchased," explains Mesh. "Nothing on our system showed that a more expensive card had been sent in – specifically, the customer had not highlighted this fact when booking the support call."**

**It says it managed to confirm the problem, which has been resolved. "The upshot is that we have provided support on a product not purchased from us," offers Mesh. "The cost of that support would normally have been in the region of £70. We**

**have not made that charge and we believe the service that the customer received from Mesh on a product not purchased from us has been excellent."**

**Fair enough, says Watchdog, but shouldn't the engineer have been able to spot the difference? Secondly, the graphics card Ben eventually got back was working fine so why did it need replacing in the first place? Who knows.**

#### TIME OUT?

On rare occasions, companies that have agreed wholeheartedly to sort out a reader's problems need an extra nudge to remind them of their commitments. Phil Lawson was one reader having problems resolving issues with Time.

"Watchdog highlighted the problems I've had with Time back in March, expressing the opinion that I should have by now received a full refund from Time," says Phil. "Sadly, Time is still dragging its heels over this point. I have phoned First National [the finance company] but it has confirmed that no instructions have been received from Time regarding my account."

**Oops. Err... Time? Any explanation? "My team passed Phil's cancellation details to our finance company FNTF at the time of the query," offers a spokesperson for the company. "Clearly, it has failed**



**Stuart Eccles prepares himself for another covert mission to PC World...**

**to cancel the policy so we have contacted FNTF again to ensure that the agreement is cancelled and Phil receives his refund as soon as possible."**

**Now, Phil, you should have definitely been sorted by now. No, really. Honest. If not, well, you know where to find us by now...**

#### PC WOES

We've always said that the best way to get companies to 'fess up is simple – keep a detailed log of every single damn communication you've ever had with the offending party – phone calls, emails, times, dates, reference numbers, the lot.

It can reap solid results and help us to get a reader a positive outcome as Stuart Eccles found when he sent us his long and

**"Watchdog said I should have received a full refund from Time back in March, but the company is dragging its heels"**

**PHIL LAWSON  
STILL WAITING FOR HIS MONEY BACK**

extended 'calendar of events'. It details the exact problems he's been having with PC World over his dodgy laptop that he wants to exchange for a new one under the 28-day exchange facility that PC World offers.

**We despatched his epic list of entries to PC World, which came back with the following. "Thank you for bringing to our attention the problems experienced by Mr Eccles," it states. "There does appear to have been some confusion regarding the repair of his laptop and we are sorry it was not resolved sooner."**

**At the time of going to press, it say its customer service department has now been in contact with you, Stuart, and have invited you to your nearest store to exchange your laptop. It concludes by apologising for the inconvenience caused. PCW**



# BUYER'S GUIDE

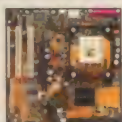
We've performed massive surgery on our Buyer's Guide to give you an even clearer picture of what makes up the dream games machine. We've got three categories for each component, giving you the Best Performer, the Best Buy and the Best Budget. If you think we've got something wrong, email us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk), and if we print your suggestion we'll give you a GeForce 4 card from Gainward

## BEST PERFORMANCE

## BEST BUY

## BEST BUDGET

### INTEL MOTHERBOARD



#### P4T-533C

STREET PRICE £123  
MANUFACTURER ASUS  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)

Following the success of its Intel-850-based P4T, ASUS release a revision based on the i850e chipset for the new 533MHz FSB Pentium 4s. With support for PC1066 RAMBUS and AGP4x, the P4T-533 manages to stand head and shoulders above the competition thanks to clever board design and high-quality components. If you have to have the best then you have to have this.



#### 845E MAX2-BLR

STREET PRICE £112  
MANUFACTURER Microstar International  
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688  
WEBSITE [www.msi.com.tw](http://www.msi.com.tw)

The Max2-BLR from MSI is one of the most rounded Intel 845E packages we've seen. Based on the newest revision of the DDR-supporting chipset for the latest 533MHz FSB chips, MSI has brought in some clever extras including onboard 5.1 sound. The addition of Bluetooth allows wireless connectivity to enabled gadgets, plus readiness for a range of peripherals.

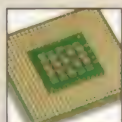


#### GA-8IEX

STREET PRICE £91.64  
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.gbt-tech.co.uk](http://www.gbt-tech.co.uk)

Just because you're working to a tight budget, don't think you have to settle for second best. If you're after an entry-level Pentium 4 then you could do worse than check out the excellent GA-8IEX from Gigabyte. Along with support for the new 500MHz FSB chips and DDR memories comes integrated Creative 5.1 sound and 10/100 network plus six USB2.0. For less than £100 you can't do better.

### INTEL PROCESSOR



#### PENTIUM 4 3.06GHZ (WITH HYPERTHREADING)

STREET PRICE £499  
MANUFACTURER Intel  
TELEPHONE 01793 403 000

WEBSITE [www.intel.co.uk](http://www.intel.co.uk)

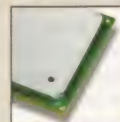
As the first CPU to break the 3GHz barrier we knew this 3066MHz chip from Intel would be fast. Incorporating a new technology - Hyperthreading - these new CPUs are capable of running like a dual-processor set-up, taking multitasking performance and responsiveness to whole new levels.



#### PENTIUM 4 'A' 2GHZ

STREET PRICE £149  
MANUFACTURER Intel  
TELEPHONE 01793 403 000  
WEBSITE [www.intel.co.uk](http://www.intel.co.uk)

Pentium 4 'A' (or the 'Northwood' core as it's known) has doubled the cache of the previous-generation chips. Based on a 400MHz bus, the 2GHz chip is compatible with any of the i845/e i850/e motherboards and would be more than respectable in any gaming system. Look at the price difference between this and the top-end Intel chip on the left. Frightening isn't it?

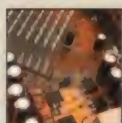


#### CELERON 1.8GHZ

STREET PRICE £61.49  
MANUFACTURER Intel  
TELEPHONE 01793 403 000  
WEBSITE [www.intel.co.uk](http://www.intel.co.uk)

With a quarter the cache of the newest Pentium 4s, the Celeron 1800MHz may not seem like it has the necessary guts for a decent gaming system but nothing could be further from the truth. At entry level these chips are a cost-effective way of getting an i845e/i850e system together, which can be upgraded to P4 later simply by swapping chips. It's a brilliant compromise solution.

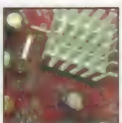
### AMD MOTHERBOARD



#### ASUS A7N8X

STREET PRICE £118  
MANUFACTURER ASUS  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)

It's been a long time coming but everything good is worth the wait and finally we've got our hands on the nForce 2 in the form of the A7N8X from ASUS. Bringing everything NVIDIA has promised including DualDDR DDR400, AGP8X, dual LAN, Firewire, USB2.0 and other added goodies such as Serial-ATA, this new board sits numero uno thanks to an excellent feature set and blistering performance.



#### K7N420PRO

STREET PRICE £83.42  
MANUFACTURER Microstar International  
TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688  
WEBSITE [www.msi.com.tw](http://www.msi.com.tw)

As the top nForce board, the K7N420Pro from MSI beat every KT266/266A offering we put it against. Add to the great performance an integrated GeForce2MX graphics chip plus separate AGP 4x slot, 100Mbit LAN, integrated 5.1 sound, and you'll agree it's perfect for seasoned enthusiasts and first-time gamers alike. Watch out for the nForce 2 boards, arriving next month though.

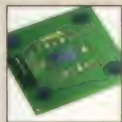


#### GA-7TXH

STREET PRICE £83  
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte  
TELEPHONE 01908 362 700  
WEBSITE [www.gbt-tech.co.uk](http://www.gbt-tech.co.uk)

Usurps another great Gigabyte board - this one is a fantastic Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative, which is plenty good enough for gamers. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR266 boards for Athlon. A complete bargain if you're looking to build a cheap system around an AMD processor.

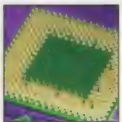
### AMD PROCESSOR



#### ATHLON XP 3000+ 'BARTON'

STREET PRICE £488  
MANUFACTURER AMD  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)

Hot on the heels of Intel's top 3GHz part comes the Athlon XP 3000+ 'Barton' from AMD. With an improved core featuring 512Kb of cache, the new chips operate at a slightly lower frequency to the Thoroughbred B stepping. However, with double the L2 memories of their predecessors the new chips are the fastest AMD have produced.



#### ATHLONXP 2200+

STREET PRICE £82  
MANUFACTURER AMD  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.amd.com/gb-uk](http://www.amd.com/gb-uk)

Running at 1.866GHz, the 2200+ AthlonXP is the quickest of AMD's original AthlonXP chips. Boasting both Quantispeed and 3DNow! Architectures plus fast cache and a 266MHz bus speed, most existing Athlon motherboards will support it out of the box. In terms of bang for your buck this provides the best middle-ground solution for gaming that money can buy.



#### ATHLONXP 2000+

STREET PRICE £65.50  
MANUFACTURER AMD  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.amd.com/gb-uk](http://www.amd.com/gb-uk)

Low-end Pentium 4s and AthlonXPs are now getting so cheap they rival the Durons and Celerons of this world - and that's exactly what we have here. AMD has traditionally been the cheaper of the two processor giants, and the AthlonXP 2000+ (top-end equipment not so long ago), is still a bargain even though the price has recently gone up.

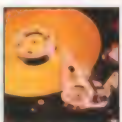
### HARD DRIVE



#### WD1200JB 120GB

STREET PRICE £115  
MANUFACTURER Western Digital  
TELEPHONE N/A  
WEBSITE [www.wdc.com](http://www.wdc.com)

With your game and media collections growing every day - some game installs use more than 2Gb of your precious storage - what you need is a really big, fast hard drive and that's exactly what Western Digital deliver with the WD1200JB. 8Mb of cache and spin speeds of 7200RPM mean that this 120Gb beast thrashes all competition beating a large proportion of SCSI drives too.



#### BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £67.50  
MANUFACTURER Seagate  
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366  
WEBSITE [www.seagate.com](http://www.seagate.com)

An old favourite at PC ZONE, the Barracuda ATA IV is packed full of clever technology, which allows this 60Gb beastie to spin at the heady heights of 7,200RPM while sounding much less obtrusive than many 5,400RPM units. Don't underestimate the difference this can make. If you're still struggling with space this could well be worth a dip.



#### U SERIES 6 40GB

STREET PRICE £64  
MANUFACTURER Seagate  
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366  
WEBSITE [www.seagate.com](http://www.seagate.com)

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, and find themselves replaced in the hallowed PC ZONE Buyer's Guide pages by its younger brother the Series 6. With the same specs as the Series 5 these new drives run even quieter and cooler than before, and provide what must be considered the minimum amount of storage space for any self-respecting gaming system.



## World's Most Powerful VGA ever...





# Worldwide No.1 VGA Card Manufacturer

## BEST PERFORMANCE



### DVDRW228

**STREET PRICE** £225.99  
**MANUFACTURER** Philips  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0101  
**WEBSITE** www.philips.co.uk

If you're looking for a flexible and future-proof bit of removable storage, this is the box to plump for. It has DVD+RW and DVD-R capabilities, which provide you with up to 4.7Gb of space per disc from a 22 minute burn. It can also handle CDR/RW at 12x and 10x respectively, and the IDE installation is a doddle. At more than £200 it's not cheap but it's a competent performer and as an all-rounder does the job brilliantly.

## BEST BUY



### CRW3200E-VK

**STREET PRICE** £86.94  
**MANUFACTURER** Yamaha  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.yamaha-europe.com

It might not be as fast as the Plextor drive but this is still a superb buy. Yamaha has consistently been praised for making great long-lasting CD-RW drives, and the 3200 is the companies' current range-topper. The overall bundle is excellent but we particularly love its Audiomaster burning mode for cutting high-quality audio CDs – and we're sure you will too. A veritable bargain if ever we saw one.

## BEST BUDGET

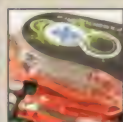


### 40X12X48 CDRW

**STREET PRICE** £45.82  
**MANUFACTURER** LiteOn  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.liteonit.com

The LiteOn 40x12x48 offers stunning value for money, costing slightly more than many standard CD-ROM drives. While maybe not as feature-packed as the Plextor and Yamaha it does have a few tricks up its sleeve, including Smart-Burn – a technology which assesses media quality and adjusts burn speeds to reduce coaster ratio. The best low-cost drive that money can buy.

CD REWRITER



### FX5800 ULTRA-TD8X

**STREET PRICE** £359  
**MANUFACTURER** MSI  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.msi.com.tw

If you want the fastest, most feature rich 3D card look no further than the GeForce FX5800 Ultra. With support well beyond the minimums of DirectX9, NVIDIA's latest high-performance GPU beats the competition hands-down. MSI's distillation of the technology offers a huge bundle of software and utilities, and is around £50 cheaper than the competition.



### VERTO TI4200 64MB

**STREET PRICE** £98  
**MANUFACTURER** PNY  
**TELEPHONE** 01256 338 609  
**WEBSITE** www.pny-europe.com/uk

The Verto TI4200 64Mb GeForce4 from PNY is a relatively late arrival. Coming within 20 per cent of TI4600 in many benchmarks, but costing up to half the price, it has all of the features of the quicker GPU without the dent in your wallet. Overall, we think this is the best solution if you're looking to future-proof your system without spending a ridiculous amount of cash along the way.



### EXCALIBUR RADEON 9000 PRO

**STREET PRICE** £83  
**MANUFACTURER** HiTech  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.hitech.com.hk

The Excalibur Radeon 9000 Pro may not be the fastest DirectX8.1 board but it's certainly the cheapest. Coming in at well under the price of the equivalent Hercules board, it sports ATI's new mainstream GPU and 64Mb of 275Mhz DDR (500Mhz). This HiTech board is a great step-up to playing shader-dominated games for the budget-conscious.

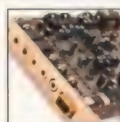
GRAPHICS CARD



### AUDIGY 2 PLATINUM EX

**STREET PRICE** £174  
**MANUFACTURER** Creative  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.amd.com

The new Audigy 2 Platinum EX is a slight departure for Creative in that it's engineered a new card for its top-end product. With all the features of the mainstream Audigy2 product including 6.1 sound and DVD-Audio, a more exty-styled breakout box plus a strong composition bundle Creative has created a product which is fantastic for both die-hard audiophiles and gamers..



### AUDIGY2

**STREET PRICE** £85.50  
**MANUFACTURER** Creative Labs  
**TELEPHONE** N/A  
**WEBSITE** www.europe.creative.com

The original Sound Blaster Audigy sat in this slot from the day it arrived, only to be replaced by its next of kin, Audigy2. Delivering further improved audio quality, though this time over 6.1 channels of Dolby Digital EX, Audigy2 is the first soundcard to receive THX certification and deliver the fidelity required to reproduce new formats such as DVD-Audio. Pound-for-pound it's the best gaming soundcard in the world.



### GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II DIGITAL EDITION

**STREET PRICE** £32  
**MANUFACTURER** Hercules  
**TELEPHONE** 020 8665 1881

**WEBSITE** www.hercules-uk.com  
 As a frequent offender on the PC ZONE Buyer's Guide, the Fortissimo II lived in the Best Bargain slot for many months – only to be replaced by its doppelgänger the Fortissimo II Digital Edition – which adds 5.1 for your DVDs and an even better software bundle.

SOUNDCARDS



### INTELLIMOUSE EXPLORER V3.0

**STREET PRICE** £37  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/uk

Probably the cheapest upgrade you can perform, but if you're playing with a rubbish mouse it could give you the biggest performance increases. Hardcore gamers love the Intellimouse Explorer v3.0, and we have to agree that it's the best ball-less rodent out there. With improved optical sensors, a better shape and even more responsive buttons it's in a word – fragtastic.



### MX500

**STREET PRICE** £32  
**MANUFACTURER** Logitech  
**TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127  
**WEBSITE** www.logitech.com

Microsoft might dominate the mouse market but it hasn't got everything its own way. The MX500 is one of the most interesting mice we've seen for a while now. The left and right buttons are hidden – being integrated into the upper shell of the body and on top of the fourth and fifth buttons. There are two either side of the wheel to assist scrolling, plus one that emulates Alt-Tab. Very handy.

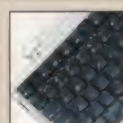


### OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE

**STREET PRICE** £27  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/uk

For gamers who don't need five buttons and a portable back-scratcher on their mice, we present the Optical Mouse Blue. With all of the high-tech optical wizardry of the other Microsoft mice, this funky blue three-buttoned offering is extremely comfortable to use and is perfect for RPG/RTS titles – or FPS-ers who prefer to keep most of their controls on the keyboard.

MICE



### PRO KEYBOARD

**STREET PRICE** £50  
**MANUFACTURER** Apple  
**TELEPHONE** 0800 039 1010  
**WEBSITE** www.apple.com/uk

While it may seem odd to have a Mac product among all this PC goodness we have good reason. Rather than faff around with 15 multifunction buttons which don't help at all in fast-paced gaming, the Pro Keyboard from Apple is simply the best USB offering out there. Quality components make it one of the most quiet and compact offerings money can buy. Remember, you get what you pay for.



### OFFICE KEYBOARD

**STREET PRICE** £27.20  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/uk

Microsoft's office keyboard may seem more focused at the professional market with the MS Office buttons across the top, but we found the scroll wheel and remappable keys brilliant in many games – in some situations acting like an additional mouse wheel, one for weapons, the other for items. Handy shortcuts abound and brilliant all-round performance make this our new Best Buy.



### MULTIMEDIA KEYBOARD

**STREET PRICE** £21.14  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/uk

The Multimedia Keyboard can only be described as the geek's friend. With support for many of the Windows XP customisations plus dedicated buttons for the instant messenger app of your choice and a central console of buttons to drive media player, life doesn't get much simpler, and, at under £25, not much cheaper either. If you're struggling with a poor keyboard give the pub a miss for one night and get this.

KEYBOARDS



### WINGMAN CORDLESS

**STREET PRICE** £34.07  
**MANUFACTURER** Logitech  
**TELEPHONE** 020 7309 0127  
**WEBSITE** www.logitech.com

The PC might not have a definitive gamepad just yet, but this is as close as it gets for the moment. The infra-red interface doesn't hinder your input. On the contrary, the fact it's wireless means your desktop is less cluttered and the discreet receiver is almost invisible. Comfortable to use and a doddle to set up, it makes the grade as best performance but only by a short distance.



### FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD

**STREET PRICE** £24.99  
**MANUFACTURER** Thrustmaster  
**TELEPHONE** 020 8665 1881  
**WEBSITE** www.thrustmaster.co.uk

This wired, force-feedback version of the Firestorm wireless might not win any awards for looks, but its ergonomics are great. Decent soft grips with superbly placed buttons and a decent d-pad make precision control a breeze. Set-up couldn't be simpler and the rumble ain't bad either. A no-nonsense pad for no-nonsense gamers.

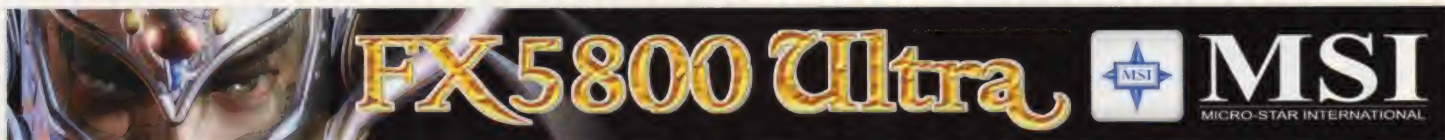


### SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY

**STREET PRICE** £12.92  
**MANUFACTURER** Microsoft  
**TELEPHONE** 0870 601 0100  
**WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad and USB. Dead simple, dead effective and at under £13 really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear. We've used them in the office for years and we've never heard a word against them.

JOYPAD





## BEST PERFORMANCE

## BEST BUY

## BEST BUDGET

## JOYSTICK

**HOTAS COUGAR**

STREET PRICE £249

MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster

TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881

WEBSITE [www.thrustmaster.co.uk](http://www.thrustmaster.co.uk)

Have we finally snapped? £249 for a joystick?

You could get a brand new GeForce 4 for that and still have enough change to go out on the razz for a couple of weeks. Ah, but the HOTAS is probably the finest flight stick in the world, complete with tome-like manual. For those that have everything this is the closest you'll get to sitting in a plane... If you're strong enough to lift it out of the box.

**SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK 2**

STREET PRICE £52.87

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100

WEBSITE [www.microsoft.com/sidewinder](http://www.microsoft.com/sidewinder)

The Sidewinder Force Feedback 2 is a fine stick with perhaps the best, most refined force-feedback settings around. Performance is great overall, with the infra-red activation sensors in the handle. Its huge base will keep it planted on your desk and as long as you don't mind the extra wiring for the external power supply, it makes a great enhancement for any airborne frolics.

**CYBORG 3D GOLD**

STREET PRICE £30

MANUFACTURER Saitek

TELEPHONE 01454 451 900

WEBSITE [www.saitek.co.uk](http://www.saitek.co.uk)

Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line, former Best Buy. USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both durable and adjustable – even the left-handed are catered for with response and accuracy both unequalled. If you're not interested in force-feedback effects (and to be honest who is these days?) this is the stick to go for.

## SPEAKERS

**MEGAWORKS 510D**

STREET PRICE £299.62

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.uk.europe.creative.com](http://www.uk.europe.creative.com)

The Megaworks 510D is the Daddy of gaming speakers – five 70W satellites and one 150W digitally amplified subwoofer together deliver 500W of power to recreate subtle sounds and devastating explosions alike. Want to know how those soldiers on Omaha Beach in *Medal Of Honour* really felt? Now's your chance. Just make sure your neighbours are away first.

**PROMEDIA 4.1**

STREET PRICE £299

MANUFACTURER Klipsch

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.klipsch.com](http://www.klipsch.com)

Klipsch's Promedia 4.1 took Best Buy many months ago with their TXI-Approval and great sound reproduction. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers to split your ears as well as the Crossfires from VideoLogic did. Whether you're a gamer or an audiophile looking for your PC to make sweet music, these are the business, as long as you can find an outlet willing to serve them up.

**XPS210**

STREET PRICE £40

MANUFACTURER Hercules

TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881

WEBSITE [www.hercules-uk.com](http://www.hercules-uk.com)

Who needs surround sound? Answer: everyone who can afford it. For everyone else, this small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set-up is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue it looks the part too...

## HEADPHONES

**HD600**

STREET PRICE £200

MANUFACTURER Sennheiser

TELEPHONE 01494 551 551

WEBSITE [www.sennheiser.co.uk](http://www.sennheiser.co.uk)

The HD600 are Audiophile-level headphones, and unless used with a soundcard like the Audigy Platinum/EX are total overkill for most gamers. That doesn't stop their fantastic response range from reproducing every gunshot and explosion perfectly with bass so deep and strong you'll be convinced your speakers are running too. They won't obviously – you'll have sold them to finance these.

**HD497**

STREET PRICE £47

MANUFACTURER Sennheiser

TELEPHONE 01494 551 551

WEBSITE [www.sennheiser.co.uk](http://www.sennheiser.co.uk)

Replacing the HD200 Masters, which used to occupy our Best Buy slot comes the HD497, also from Sennheiser. These new headphones have an enhanced frequency response range which might not come close to the HD600, but is still pretty damn good. Their extremely comfortable design coupled with easily replaceable parts, mean these headphones could well outlast your PC.

**GAMEVOICE USB**

STREET PRICE £34.07

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100

WEBSITE [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

When are headphones more than just headphones? Simple – when they're the Microsoft Gamevoice USB. The Gamevoice allows you to talk to your mates online as you play clan games with a handy control panel which lets you switch between comms channels. Adding a new dimension to your online gaming, and doubling as a decent set of headphones they're a bit of a bargain.

## TFT

**180MT**

STREET PRICE £939

MANUFACTURER Philips

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.philips.co.uk](http://www.philips.co.uk)

The 180MT from Philips is more than just a flat panel. An 18in fourth-generation screen with VGA connectivity plus inputs for Scart, S-Video and an RF tuner mean that you can ditch your telly and pipe all manner of consoles, TV and video kit through the one screen. You can even use picture-in-picture to watch the latest *Futurama* while you die repeatedly in *BF1942*. Classic.

**SYNCMASTER 181T**

STREET PRICE £599

MANUFACTURER Samsung

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com)

What do you need to be heralded as our Best Buy in the TFT category? You need to boast top specs, which the 181T provides with a response time of 25ms, a contrast ratio of 500:1 and rated brightness of 250 cd/m2. This results in a cleaner, crisper picture than our previous award-winner. A good start but the 181T is also cheaper and bigger (a whole inch diagonally) which completes the perfect package.

**T1620B**

STREET PRICE £522.87

MANUFACTURER Sharp

TELEPHONE 0800 262 958

WEBSITE [www.sharp.co.uk](http://www.sharp.co.uk)

Sharp's 16in T1620B is more than £100 cheaper than the iiyama and delivers all the visual goodies albeit on a smaller display area. Delivering 1280x1024 on a digital 75Hz, this screen will make your games look great while allowing you to reclaim some desktop real estate from large lumbering CRTs. If TFTs aren't quite affordable yet, this proves that the day isn't far away.

## MONITOR

**GDM-FW900**

STREET PRICE £1,139

MANUFACTURER Sony

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)

Do you remember the day when PCs used to ship with 14in screens? Pah. The gigantic 24in GDM-FW900 from Sony has to be seen to be believed. Costing almost double that of the iiyama Vision Master Pro 512, you'd expect something special and that's exactly what you get. Supporting nutty resolutions such as 2304x1440 at 80Hz, you can be sure this ultra-flat screen will deliver a rock-solid picture at all times.

**VISION MASTER PRO 512**

STREET PRICE £527.27

MANUFACTURER iiyama

TELEPHONE 01438 745 482

WEBSITE [www.iiyama.co.uk](http://www.iiyama.co.uk)

Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a smaller viewable area than suggested – 20in instead of 22in, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048x1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. There's also a four-port USB hub and integrated speakers which are OK for Windows, but may be tinny for games or music.

**720P 17-INCH CRT**

STREET PRICE £116.32

MANUFACTURER Hansol

TELEPHONE 01252 360 400

WEBSITE [www.hansol-uk.com](http://www.hansol-uk.com)

For the budget-conscious gamer Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it does 1280x1024 at an excellent 85Hz (and for those mad enough, 1600x1200 at 75Hz). Focus is tight and the picture sharp, and considering you're paying a little over £100 there's not a lot that will touch this for the money. If you've still got a 15in monitor, consider yourself rebuked.

## MP3 PLAYER

**APPLE IPOD**

STREET PRICE £388 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Apple

TELEPHONE 020 8210 1000

WEBSITE [www.apple.com/ipod](http://www.apple.com/ipod)

With all of the styling of their desktop systems, the iPod caused a few dropped jaws for looks alone. Packing a 20Gb hard disk and speedy Firewire interface, the new models are finally Windows-compatible and come with excellent headphones and a tiny little inline remote control that means you don't have to keep fishing it out of your pocket to change tracks or up the volume.

**ARCHOS JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA**

STREET PRICE £330 inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Archos

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.archos.com](http://www.archos.com)

While it may never win any awards for aesthetics, the Jukebox Multimedia from Archos is the Swiss Army knife of media players. Handling one of the widest selections of file types the player can even play back a selection of video formats including DIVX. Sound is fantastic but as with a lot of other players on the market, the bundled headphones are shite.

**MUVO**

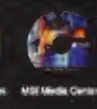
STREET PRICE £67

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE [www.europe.creative.com](http://www.europe.creative.com)

The MuVo is one of the smartest gadgets we've seen. It comes in two parts, a USB key that plugs into any system running XP (without drivers), and a battery housing. Plug it into your PC and you can back up your documents. Drag a few MP3s onto the drive and when you snap the two halves together and plug in some headphones you've got one of the smallest MP3 players on the market.





# FX 5800 Ultra

*Power and performance, the two elements every gamer craves, are the heart and soul of the GeForce™ FX*

## FX5800 Ultra-TD8X



### AGP8X

#### TV-Out / DVI-I / 128MB DDR II

- Powered by NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5800 Ultra - the fastest GPU in the market
- Supports AGP 8X, up to 2.1GB/s AGP bus bandwidth
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- Develop games faster than ever with Cg programming language
- Ensures the best performance and application compatibility for all DirectX 9.0 and OpenGL® 1.4 applications
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- Extra value software bundle

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www.vgicomputers.com  
www.watford.co.uk



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**HANDS-ON WITH DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN.**

**OW DOWNS PROMISE**

**RELEASED**

**FATHER'S SHOTS**

**H DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK**

**PC DEMO IMMINENT**

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**PCZONE** want IT? **Groovy**

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**FORUMS**

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View recent messages

Forums	Threads	Posts	Last post
<b>PC Zone</b>			
This low-life dive is the home of PCZone.co.uk - put up a stool at the bar, order a large tequila and make sure you have a kebab on the way home	2299	74852	Today 11:34
<b>PC Zone</b>			
The forum for leaders of military juntas, and topical discussion of games and gaming on all formats	4318	60805	Today 9:08
Need to get a comment about PC gaming off your chest? USB being an SOB? Then get in here right now!	2124	11128	Today 11:05
<b>Cheats/Strategy Forum</b>			
If you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat-master or are just looking for that elusive code, here's where you'll find the answers	292	1804	Today 8:22

Current adjusted date is: Tue Dec 17 11:16 AM

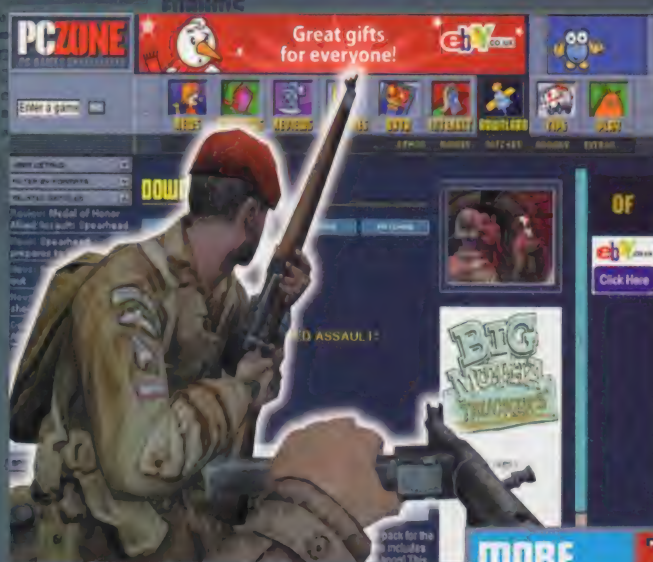
**MORE**

**www.pczone.co.uk**



## DOWNLOADS

**GET THE LATEST DEMOS,** patches, mods, add-ons and movies as soon as they're released from our vast library of downloads. You can also get them from our lightning-fast servers at over 50K a second by joining the **PC ZONE Gold Club** from as little as £1!



**PCZONE** THE GAMER'S DIGITAL ZONE

Great gifts for everyone!

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**CAN'T PLAY FAIR?** Join the club: We've got Europe's biggest collection of cheats, over 37,000 for over 8,000 games.

**PCZONE** ...CHOOSE CD EDITION OR NEW DVD EDITION!

Enter a game:

**CHEATSTATION**

37,676 cheat codes  
82 game guides  
10 formats  
8,887 games  
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**LATEST CHEATS**

FORMAT	GAME TITLE	UPDATED
PC	AGE OF MIGHT	1 Nov 02
PC	AGE OF MYTHOLOGY	29 Nov 02
PC	AGE OF MIGHT	29 Nov 02
PC	G.B.R. OF THE WORLD (RESPONSIBLE GAMES)	31 Nov 02

**TOP CHEAT**

**IRON STORM**


**TOP GUIDE**

**HOW TO CREATE LEVELS FOR NEVERWINTER NIGHTS**

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## PCZONE SERVERS

**AVOID THE ONLINE CHAFE:** play on our super-fast servers with fellow PCZone readers.



**PCZONE** Revised and Updated Job Section **PCZONE** skygamepad

**More**

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**ARE YOU THE KING OF THE WORLD?**

If you play games online then you need to check out csports.net, a system that scours every game server in the world to provide you with a constantly updated world ranking.

**CSports.NET** includes...

- Personalised ladders:** start your own mini-leagues with your friends.
- Live stats:** find out who's playing what and where.
- Favourites:** find every server that's playing the map you want instantly.

**More**

# one.co.uk

THE FIRST CHOICE FOR PC GAMERS





# EXTENDED PLAY

Finishing a game is only the beginning in Extended Play. Maps, mods, add-ons and extras are all here to help you get the most out of the games you play

**ROX & RO11!!!**



■ **K3W1 D00DE++E** Rhianna Pratchett

▲ Are you lost in a world where words like 1337 and W00t! mean nothing to you? Do you hate going online because you get flamed by 10 year olds who've already forgotten more about the Internet than you'll ever know? Is your gaming cred as low as it can go because your PC is a wheezing tortoise in a world of ninja systems? If so, you could really do with heeding the wise words of Mr Wand in our guide on page 120. As a man who has been through more games servers than most people have been through socks, Wandy is a veteran of online etiquette and will educate you in the ways of walking the walk and talking the talk on your way to gaming notoriety, even if your cashflow isn't too healthy.

Of course, we won't leave you without your old Extended Play favourites, Games That Changed The World on page 140, Modwatch on page 124 and not forgetting page 145, where you'll see Richie harking back to his heady, floppy-haired days of 1986 in Retro Zone. And just in case you're wondering what we did with Comment, you might want to take a look at the return of an old favourite that is currently residing in its place.



## We're Going In



More of Chris Ryan than you bargained for

■ [www.codemasters.com/igi2/english/front.htm](http://www.codemasters.com/igi2/english/front.htm)

**WHILE IGI 2** may not have garnered the glowing reviews we might have hoped for, we've managed to secure a load of goodies this month to help you squeeze even more fun from the box. For starters, the first UK *IGI 2* upgrade is out, featuring a new jungle multiplayer objective-based mission, where you are required to hack a computer and destroy a temple held by the Conspiracy.

For those looking to set up their own private multiplayer games, we've also included the latest standalone server installation that won't require your game CD. For those having problems with the game, we've got the full safe mode patch for those having trouble tweaking the graphical settings.

As well as this, we've also got an audio interview with the man that lead *IGI 2* character David Jones was based on, ex-SAS soldier Chris Ryan. From joining the 22nd Special Air Service in 1984 to serving in and surviving the 1991 Gulf War, Mr Ryan talks about his military career, the training he's been through and his views on *IGI 2* itself. And if that wasn't enough for even the most hardcore *IGI* fans, we've also got audio previews of some of the music from the game. All this combined with our screenshot pack and concept art gallery and you should be more than ready to strap on your combat pack and head off to the battle zones of *IGI 2*.



The choice method of extraction.



Avoid obvious routes at all cost.



Hardly the most covert approach.

### CHEATS AHOY!



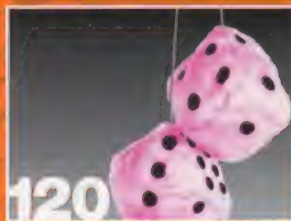
The old Cheat Master section of these pages may be dead, but we haven't buried it completely. Check out our cover discs where the art of cheating is still very much alive and kicking. You can find all the latest cheats for your favourite games under CheatStation in the Extended Play section of the discs.

This month we've got everything you need to cheat your way through *TOCA Race Driver*, *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, *Devastation*, *Vietcong* and *Highland Warriors* in Extended Play on the discs. And in case you're in any doubt, just remember: those who can, do... those who can't, cheat. It's the only way.

**"Chris Ryan talks about his military career, the training he's been through and his views on *IGI 2* itself"**

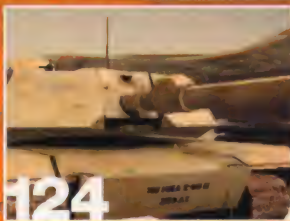






#### 120 THE GUIDE

Lose your noobie status



#### 124 THE MOD SQUAD

Because we hate rockers



#### 126 DISC PAGES

What's in store this month?



#### 130 FIGHT CLUB

Can you whip the ZONE boys?

# BF1942 Strikes Back

The *Star Wars* mod to end them all?

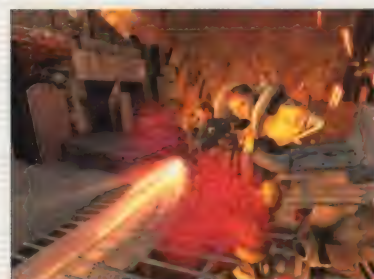
■ [www.swbattleground.com](http://www.swbattleground.com)

**IT WAS** only a matter of time before the *Battlefield* 1942 engine spawned some big mods, and they don't come much bigger than the forthcoming *Star Wars: Battlefield*. Rather than commanding a band of multi-disciplined infantry into combat over Wake Island or El Alamein, *Star Wars: Battlefield* sees the Empire and the Rebel Alliance duke it out in Lucas-inspired environments such as Hoth, Endor and Tatooine.

As well as being able to choose your favourite class of Stormtrooper, you'll also be able to pilot a number of vehicles from the films, such as the X-Wing, Millennium Falcon and even full-scale AT-ATs. And with any luck, *Star Wars: Battlefield* won't fall by the wayside like so many *Star Wars* mods from recent months have as it's already looking very accomplished for a mod so early into development. May the force be with it.



I'll be having that AT-ST...



More UT 2003 - more carnage.

## Unreal Tournament 2003

ON THE DVD ■ [www.unrealtournament2003.com](http://www.unrealtournament2003.com)

**WITH DIGITAL** Extremes providing a bonus pack in Issue 127, we thought that was it for official UT 2003 add-ons, but this month Epic has only gone and released another pack for the devoted. Featuring a massive ten new maps for existing game modes, the pack also includes three new game types, Mutant, Last Man Standing and Invasion.

The game dynamic for the remaining modes has also changed slightly with two new adrenaline combinations on offer for those on a roll. To install the bonus pack, you'll need to update your game to version 2199, which DVD readers will find in the Essential Patches section on the discs.

## Ghost Recon

ON THE DVD ■ [www.javaman.com](http://www.javaman.com)

**IF YOU'RE** a serious *Ghost Recon* modder then check out Smart Tools Version 1.0 on this month's discs, which will ease some of your modding pains. These come courtesy of Chris 'Javaman' McClellan and will help you when using 3D Studio Max versions 4 and 5, to create your *Ghost Recon* mods.

Contained in the pack are tools to aid you in creating, grouping and tweaking rooms, making stairs and also a feature called Scene Ghost, which allows you to make a backup of your scene. Check out the installation notes at Javaman's site listed above and for the latest news on the *Ghost Recon* community keep tabs on [www.theplatoon.com](http://www.theplatoon.com).

## Battlefield 1942

ON THE DVD ■ [www.dice.se](http://www.dice.se)

**FOR THOSE** of you out there who have been playing *Battlefield 1942* since the multiplayer demo first hit and have finally exhausted all the maps offered in both the retail game and *Road To Rome*, Digital Illusions has a little something for you.

Officially developed and released this month is the Aberdeen map, which provides a fresh stomping ground for seasoned *Battlefield 1942* veterans with a capture the outposts map in a desert setting, with tanks as the primary method of transport and weaponry. Hopefully, this is the first of many official freebies from Digital Illusions in the run up to the rumoured second *Battlefield 1942* retail expansion.



What do you mean, they're behind me?

### SHORTS

#### ARMED AND DANGEROUS



America's army is all over the news at the moment, but if you want to check out the latest and supposedly final revision of America's Army: Operations, check out the link on this month's DVD or head to [www.armygame.com](http://www.armygame.com). The latest release includes numerous enhancements to the online and audio elements of the game engine and adds an extra mission.

#### DIRECT TO YOU



Essential PC material is Microsoft's latest DirectX, version 9.0a End-User Runtime ([www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)). As well as correcting problems with MSN users, DirectX 9.0a also aids certain online multiplayer games. Remember DirectX can't be uninstalled so make sure you create a system restore point.

#### GO JOE



In times of trouble you could always count on the square-of-jaw GI Joe and what better place for our all-American hero than in another epic *Battlefield 1942* mod in development. Check out some spectacular looking screens shots and a load of info on what you can expect in the final mod at [www.planetbattlefield.com/gi](http://www.planetbattlefield.com/gi).

#### BRAVE NEW WORLD



New World Order may have wanted to become the new Counter-Strike, but the king of mods can rest easy on its laurels for a bit longer. Nevertheless, NWO is still blessed with a great co-op mode and enough bells and whistles to make it an interesting take on the CS game-play. To extend the experience even more you'll find the official map pack for the game on this month's discs.



# THE GUIDE: HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR GAMING CRED

**Sick of the Internet calling you a noob? Phil Wand explores ways to earn respect from your fellow gamers**

**FFS NEWB LAMER U-SUX!!** At some point in their lives, every gamer will read a similar insult – the embarrassment of being singled out as a clueless novice made worse by the fact it's often made by someone much younger and more stupid than you. Whether it's because you didn't know where to take the bomb in *Counter-Strike* ("UMG N00B") or because you're using the drivers from the CD that accompanied your video card rather than the unstable beta on the manufacturer's website ("U FAG"), the pain is the same. Forget your education, ignore the fact you have the respect of your real-life peers. You don't spend every second of your free time in IRC and you have an eight-month-old video card – you're going to be ridiculed whenever you're on the Internet.

## ON THE ROAD TO RESPECT

The first step on the path to gaming credibility is recognising that your existing set-up and the way you use it just don't cut it with the online elite. Sure, you can beat your brother and his mates at *Command & Conquer*, but out in cyberspace that counts for nothing, soldier. You need to rethink your strategy for the online world – read on, pick up as many credibility points as you can and hold your virtual head up high.

## SKILL-MADDENING HARDWARE

Ain't no point trying to impress people if all Godzilla – your hard drive (see below) – is packing is 500MHz, 64Mb and a PCI Voodoo3. What you need is some crushing computing power – the kind of technology found in nuclear-powered submarines

and downed UFOs. You can do this the old-fashioned way – rich parents, a Saturday job, a five-year bank loan – or you can take the path of least resistance and lie. One of the joys of being online is the fact you can make stuff up the whole time, and as long as you keep a mental note of all the huge fibs you've made, and act like they're true, nobody will be any the wiser.

## ENGINE AND RUNNING GEAR

Whether you purchase or prevaricate, what Godzilla gets depends on how many friends you need. You'll garner most respect from prohibitively expensive technology that boasts new acronyms in its specification, or is rarer than a woody in a retirement home. A Pentium 4 3.06HT scores on all counts and a GeForce FX will match it awesomely – it's costly

## HARDWARE STREET CRED



### PENTIUM 4 3.06HT

£500 | [www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)

**95 CREDPOINTS**

The world's most impressive desktop processor. Hyper-threading will make your nerd pals pitch tents in their boxers.



### GEFORCE FX 5800 ULTRA

£400 | [www.nvidia.com](http://www.nvidia.com)

**95 CREDPOINTS**

A damp squib GeForce? It certainly ain't a bad card, but might well lose its crown to the 9800. The price scoops the points.

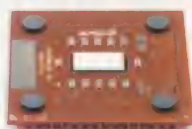


### RADEON 9800 PRO

£300 | [www.ati.com](http://www.ati.com)

**90 CREDPOINTS**

High power, high quality. Catalyst 3.x drivers very usable and the cost isn't prohibitive. Keep a look out for the 256Mb version.

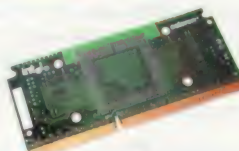


### ATHLON XP 3000+ BARTON

£440 | [www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)

**80 CREDPOINTS**

The Athlon gets within a gnat's chuff of its rival, but ultimately, though, it is no match for the two-headed beast from Intel.

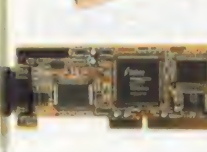


### PENTIUM II CELERON 266

£5 | [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)

**5 CREDPOINTS**

Pick one of these up in an online auction and the postage will be more than the processor. This really is for sadists only.



### SOME RANDOM VGA CARD

75p | [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)

**1 CREDPOINT**

Paint dries quicker than this old bastard, and a chimp with a crayon offers better quality. Shoot yourself rather than get one.

## MONIKER OF THE BEAST

### THE NAME OF THE GAME MACHINE

Giving your PC a name may seem like a daft idea, but each time you refer to it you'll be amazed just how many people respond. "Just rebooting Godzilla," you'll say. "Godwhat?" they'll ask. And from that point on you can lead them wherever you like.

#### GOOD NAMES

Godzilla  
Mr Big Bollocks  
Gargantua  
Ninja Bastard  
Damage  
The Own-a-tron  
Awesomator

#### BAD NAMES

Old Girl  
Peewee  
Captain Pathetic  
Godzuki  
My Heaving Crapbox  
Wheezy Tortoise  
Useless Piece of Shit

and nobody else has one. A system featuring both will really max out those credibility points – match everything with 1Gb Corsair RAM and you can start your own fan club.

#### LINKS

**INTEL CORPORATION**  
[www.intel.com](http://www.intel.com)  
**ADVANCED MICRO DEVICES**  
[www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)  
**NVIDIA** [www.nvidia.com](http://www.nvidia.com)  
**ATI** [www.ati.com](http://www.ati.com)  
**CORSAIR MEMORY**  
[www.corsairmicro.com](http://www.corsairmicro.com)





## THINKING INTO THE BOX

Being an e-daddy doesn't stop at processors, video cards and senseless amounts of RAM. No, unless Godzilla is a small cube with Plexiglas windows, cold cathode lighting and luminous braided drive cables, you're nowhere in the case stakes. Many previously respectable manufacturers are introducing ATX boxes with transparent panels and acrylic viewing windows, allowing you and your pals to see when your mum last dusted.

Don't be dissuaded by the fact that every computer looks the same under the hood – a motherboard, a fan, some cards, the ugly end of your hard drive – transparent is the new black, and being floodlit in an impossibly cool shade of blue is the new beige.

### LINKS

**THERMALTAKE**  
www.thermaltake.com  
**SHUTTLE COMPUTER GROUP**  
us.shuttle.com  
**CHILL-TEK**  
www.chill-tek.com

## CASE STUDIES



### XASER III

£150 | [www.thermaltake.com](http://www.thermaltake.com)  
**90 CREDPOINTS**

An aluminium tower block, complete with a set of French doors. Great pose factor.



### COLD CATHODE KIT

£11+ | [www.chill-tek.com](http://www.chill-tek.com)  
**80 CREDPOINTS**

Like including Heskey in the England team, these serve no purpose whatsoever. Which is why they're awesome.



### SHUTTLE PC

£250+ | [us.shuttle.com](http://us.shuttle.com)  
**75 CREDPOINTS**

They may be getting more popular thanks to their size, but Shuttle PCs still look plain bad.



### ATX CASE

£35 | [www.xcase.co.uk](http://www.xcase.co.uk)  
**35 CREDPOINTS**

Entirely plastic and with no cutaway panels, this is truly frumpy. But as it lives under your desk, why not?

**“At some point, every gamer will suffer the embarrassment of being singled out on the Net as a clueless novice”**

## GOTTA BE COOL

Having Satan's own processor means you'll need cooling from heaven, and it's here that you can really notch up some bonus points. As with clothing it's all in the name – go for brands such as Thermalright, Thermaltake and Zalman, the odder the shape the better. If you're feeling particularly adventurous, the Koolance Exos is an awesome water-based cooler that will give you instant deity status (assuming you don't ruin the carpet, kill yourself, or both).

If you remain unsold on designer fans and people staring at Godzilla's privates, go for a refrigerated case instead. Compressors, condensers and evaporators ensure you no longer have to use scarecrows to stop pigeons from being sucked into your air intakes; you turn it on, it gets cold, voilà. Sure, you'll instantly void the warranty on whatever you put inside it, but if you can afford to buy it then such trivial matters shouldn't bother you. And even if you don't overclock the living crap out of everything afterwards, the fact you'll be running your processor at minus 20°C says you can, if the mood takes you.

### LINKS

**KOOLANCE** [www.koolance.com](http://www.koolance.com)  
**MAPLIN** [www.maplin.co.uk](http://www.maplin.co.uk)  
**QUIET PC** [www.quietpc.com](http://www.quietpc.com)  
**ASETAK** [www.asetek.com](http://www.asetek.com)



## THE PERIPHERALS

You're not serious about gaming unless you have a Razer Boomslang parked alongside your keyboard. It's the Porsche 911 of mice – low-slung, dated, cheap to the touch, but awesome in the hands of a professional. The downside is that, like the 911, they're getting increasingly common in all the places you'd expect to find them, so unless you intend putting in the practice to move like a pro it doesn't mean much for your score. In any case, it's safer to go for an optical mouse as they look awesome in the dark.

Last, but by no means least, choose yourself a screen. A

decent display will set you back about £500, instantly dwarfing the cost of everything else in your system – so if you're working to a budget, leave yourself a gap or you're in for a great deal of guesswork. If you fancy more than 22in you'll be paying in excess of £1,000 – opt for a flat screen and you can double that. The downside with a 23in widescreen panel is that your mum will need to pester your dad for a new SUV just to bring it back from the shop.

### LINKS

**SONY UK** [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)  
**LOGITECH** [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)  
**TERRATEC** [www.razerzone.com](http://www.razerzone.com)  
**RELISYS** [www.relisys.co.uk](http://www.relisys.co.uk)

## HEAT SEEKERS



### EXOS + WATER COOLER

£140 | [www.koolance.com](http://www.koolance.com)  
**95 CREDPOINTS**

My physics teacher always told me that water and electricity don't go together. And guess what? He's dead now.



### MAPLIN WATER COOLING KIT

£80 | [www.maplin.co.uk](http://www.maplin.co.uk)  
**80 CREDPOINTS**

Water, water, everywhere. Maplin make their own liquid cooling kit for mad overclockers. And it ain't that pricey.



### ZALMAN CNPS7000-CU

£40 | [www.zalman.co.kr](http://www.zalman.co.kr)  
**85 CREDPOINTS**

Nifty? Yes. Pretty? Definitely. Quiet? No need to yell. For £40 you can't go far wrong.



### VAPOCHILL

£400 | [www.asetek.com](http://www.asetek.com)  
**90 CREDPOINTS**

Heat is the overclocker's arch enemy, and refrigeration the bestest friend in the whole wide world. Ever.

## SCREEN TEST



### SONY 23in WIDE FLAT PANEL LCD

£2,500 | [www.sony.co.uk](http://www.sony.co.uk)  
**100 CREDPOINTS**

This Arthur C Clarke-style obelisk shouts that you've arrived louder than anything else. And look – you can't afford it!



### LOGITECH MX700

£50 | [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)  
**80 CREDPOINTS**

Cordless, optical, tops for games. Even comes with its own recharging cradle. Aw, rock-a-bye-mousey...



### RAZER BOOMSLANG

£50 | [www.razerzone.com](http://www.razerzone.com)  
**65 CREDPOINTS**

Razer looked like it would go under after everyone failed to get to grips with its product range and bought Logitech instead.



### RELISYS TE555

£75 | [www.relisys.co.uk](http://www.relisys.co.uk)  
**30 CREDPOINTS**

And at the other end of the scale, the Relisys TE555 costs the same as anything worth £75. Little pose value, but well worth the money.



## MAXIMUM OWNAGE SOFTWARE

Once you've got Godzilla up and running and cooled to perfection, the next thing on the shopping list is Windows XP. As an operating system there's precious little to differentiate it from its predecessor, but as a platform for themes, wallpapers, screensavers and bizarre desktop enhancements, there's none better. If you and The 'Zilla make it to LAN parties, even a plain vanilla install of XP looks delicious – the window borders have rounded edges, and things light up when you put the mouse cursor over them.

While this is awesome enough on its own, to stay ahead of the game you'll need specialist tools to make your software different from everyone else. The golden rule here is that it has to appear as though it fell out of a passing mothership – what it does and how it does it are irrelevant. As long as it looks esoteric and you have to spend more than 15 minutes squinting at tooltips on rendered alien slime-buttons, it's a goer.

## SKINNY PUPPY

Ain't nothing more embarrassing than hauling Godzilla round to a friend's house and realising at his front door that you've forgotten to install a custom desktop – and your mum's just sped off to take your sister to

dance practice. Your pal is running a dual-boot system, one half SuSE Linux, one half Microsoft Windows. The former makes him look like a hacker; the latter is a barely recognisable copy of Windows 98, the customised interface having stretched the bounds of taste and the realms of usability. OK, so you have XP and a long lead on hardware, and yes, the lights in your case bleach fabric, but his desktop is so tomorrow that it'll hurt. Twin Buffy stickers provide the finishing touches – what a pro!

But all is not lost. Products such as Stardock's Object Desktop can be downloaded in a flash, and allow you to tweak and fiddle with the default appearance of Windows by reshaping its look and feel. The vast bulk of replacement frames, images and cursors are garish, blatant copyright theft or just plain awful, but if you couple Object Desktop with Winbar, which gives at-a-glance readouts of Godzilla's vital signs, you'll have something truly awesome.

## LINKS

**STARDOCK** [www.stardock.com](http://www.stardock.com)  
**MICROSOFT** [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)  
**WINBAR** [www.winbar.nl](http://www.winbar.nl)  
**VIRTUAL PLASTIC** [www.virtualplastic.net](http://www.virtualplastic.net)  
**WINCUSTOMIZE** [www.wincustomize.com](http://www.wincustomize.com)

## GET TOOLED UP



### OBJECT DESKTOP

£32 | [www.stardock.com](http://www.stardock.com)  
**80 CREDPOINTS**

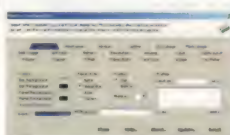
Turns Windows into an unusable, graphically offensive mess. Chalk up some points for being weird.



### WINDOWS XP HOME EDITION

£165 | [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)  
**75 CREDPOINTS**

Turns your PC into an unusable, graphically offensive mess. Chalk up some points for being right at the cutting edge.



### WINBAR

FREE | [www.winbar.nl](http://www.winbar.nl)  
**75 CREDPOINTS**

A power LED on the case is enough for most people, but if you need to know the RPM of your fan, this is the tool for you.



### CURSОРXP

£7 | [www.virtualplastic.com](http://www.virtualplastic.com)  
**50 CREDPOINTS**

Like a 3-Series BMW on a flecked tarmac driveway, CursorXP says that you live in Essex and read Max Power.



## BEHAVE LIKE A VETERAN

Now that you have the suit and the shoes, it's time to learn how to walk the walk. Principally, this means discarding spelling and grammar, throwing manners out the window, and varying between total disinterest and outright hostility whenever you talk to anyone. Remember – attitude is everything.

Take the following real-world conversation:

**TIMOTHY:** Hello Martin

**MARTIN:** Hey Tim! How's tricks?

**TIMOTHY:** Pretty bad. My primary partition is on the blink and I don't have the money for another drive.

**MARTIN:** Erk. Tell you what, I've got a spare 20Gb one here. Want to borrow it until you get yours replaced?

**TIMOTHY:** Would you mind?

Once you've downloaded an instant messenger like Trillian, or have installed mIRC and connected to an IRC network, you'll find this conversation becomes:

Joins: D4RKLord

+D4RKLord: SHIT

@Gimp: sup dark

+D4RKLord: hd is b0rked :-(

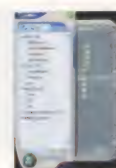
@Gimp: that sux

+D4RKLord: SHIT

@Gimp is away: Half-Life (NS) – 192.168.0.22:27035 \* Since 6:23pm

IRC's QuakeNet network is the best-known meeting place for gamers and offers the largest audience from whom you can extract respect. Note the symbols next to their names: these are IRC's badges of honour, blessing the user with the powers that elude them in real life. The + symbol denotes voice, meaning the user may speak freely in a moderated channel, and the @ symbol denotes a channel operator, meaning he or she may modify the topic, kick and ban users, add credence to any shit they talk, and so on and so forth.

## HAPPY TALKING



### TRILLIAN

£13 | [www.ceruleanstudios.com](http://www.ceruleanstudios.com)  
**70 CREDPOINTS**  
 Combines IRC, AIM, MSN, ICQ and Yahoo! Instant Messenger into one app.



### MIRC

£13 | [www.mirc.co.uk](http://www.mirc.co.uk)  
**40 CREDPOINTS**  
 Having it doesn't earn you cred, but using it properly does.

Be aware these badges are a lot more than just that. The + symbol is most often used to show that the person in question is a chum (or, more often, is someone you'd like as a chum), and @ means that you've arrived – and your credibility will quadruple if you wear it in the right places. It's your job to suck up to the existing ops and brown-nose your way up through the IRC ranks.

## LINKS

**TRILLIAN** [www.trillian.cc](http://www.trillian.cc)  
**MIRC** [www.mirc.co.uk](http://www.mirc.co.uk)  
**THINKGEEK** [www.thinkgeek.com](http://www.thinkgeek.com)

## LEARN THE LINGO

Key to your survival online is understanding and using the lingo. The simplest way to get heard is to scatter your conversations with dyslexic outpourings, mad shortenings and leave grammar alone. The further removed your language is from real English, the more likely you are to gain respect.

One of the more common dialects is 1337, pronounced leet, derived from the English word moron. Although constantly evolving, the essence of 1337speak is substituting common or garden vowels for numbers and arithmetic symbols. So 'a' becomes '4', 'e' becomes '3', 'i' becomes '+', and so on. And if you get stuck, just make things up as you go



People thrive off group membership, and there's no group more feared than hackers. Wear the shirt and watch the respect soar.

along – remarkably, you'll find that people still understand you.

Another strange lingo from online is a subset of hacker, the construct of which involves putting the word 'much' in front of anything you are about to say, and using the modifier -age. As an example, a taxi rank would be much cabbage, and a particularly messy frag in *Quake III* would be much gabbage.

## FINAL WORDS

If you can amass more than 800 credpoints, you're well on the way to being accepted as one of the online nobility (and desperately short of cash). Once people realise just how awesome your setup is, and how rude you are to your fellows, it won't matter if you don't know how to fly a Spitfire in *Battlefield 1942* – the fact you're playing badly on one helluva PC means you're alright by them. [24]





# KOMPLETT.co.uk

## SAVE TIME AND MONEY

**NEW!**



### Creative Speaker I-Trigue 2.1 3300

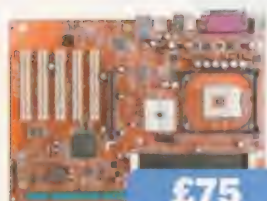
Chic yet powerful, Creative I-Trigue 2.1 3300 is designed with looks to enhance your desktop, and performance-rich enough to enhance any desktop entertainment.

- ▶ With Subwoofer and two monitors
- ▶ Audio Amplifier integrated
- ▶ With remote control
- ▶ Retail-version

**£75**

SKU: B000000000-1170118

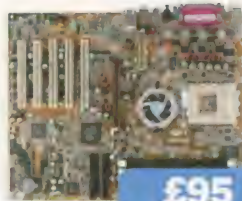
**We are  
second to  
none on price  
...take a look  
for yourself!**



**£75**

#### Abit BH7 mainboard for S478/533

- ▶ S-ATA, ATX
- ▶ i845PE, FSB800, LAN
- ▶ DDR400, USB 2.0



**£95**

#### Abit NF7-S V2.0 mainboard for Socket A

- ▶ S-ATA, ATX
- ▶ nForce2-SPP/MCP-T, 1394
- ▶ SATA KIT



**£85**

#### Gainward GeForce FX 5200

- ▶ 128 MB DDR 5ns
- ▶ AGP, "PRO/660TV-DVI"
- ▶ Tv-Out, Retail



**£49**

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#### Sony IDE 52x24x52x CD recorder

- ▶ Internal Retail Kit (CRX220A1)
- ▶ Power-Burn for Buffer Underrun Protec.
- ▶ Cache / Buffer Size: 2 MB Input



**£110**

**Western Digital**

#### Western Digital Caviar 120 GB IDE

- ▶ Special Edition, 8MB cache WD1200JB
- ▶ Spindle Speed: 7200 RPM
- ▶ Interface type: DMA/ATA-100 (Ultra)

1 GB is defined as 1,000,000,000 bytes with regard to hard drive capacity.



**£325**

**Hansol**

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- ▶ Silver version
- ▶ Integrated speakers
- ▶ TCO-99 (standard)



**£119**

**jazPiper**

#### JazPiper MP3 DVE128U+ player

- ▶ 128 MB, USB
- ▶ MP3 playback, Line-In, Id3tag
- ▶ Dig.rec.time: 480min - voice recording



**£479**

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#### Nikon Coolpix 4500 digital camera

- ▶ 4.0 Megapixel, 4x zoom
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- ▶ Automatic Built-In Pop-up Flash

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# THE MODSQUAD

It's totally modtastic folks, says Tony Lamb...

## DESERT COMBAT 0.2 + 0.25 PATCH

ON THE  
DVD

SIZE 85Mb + 4Mb REQUIRES Full version of Battlefield 1942

www.desertcombat.com



F16... quick and deadly.



The Abrams M1 packs a fearsome punch.

**THERE ARE** few things on an epic scale these days – the fight between good and evil, or the volume of Wandy's fan mail spring to mind – but with a raft of ever more inventive mods in the pipeline it looks as if *Battlefield 1942* could join the select list of epic, most-modded FPS games. *Desert Combat* is one of the new variants for *BF1942* and it's something of a star.

*Desert Combat* bills itself as a 21st century warfare mod and in

this uncertain world it's obviously particularly topical. Vehicles, weapons, skins and capabilities are all modern-day, currently reflecting the conflict between the US and Iraq, although more are planned including Britain, Germany, India and Pakistan. Many items will be very familiar to FPS fans or indeed anyone who watches the 10 o'clock news (M16, MP5, AK-47 and RPG weapons or Abrams, A10, T72 and MIG29

vehicles for example). So far, *Desert Combat* doesn't have any maps of its own, relying instead on customising some of the standard *BF1942* maps by replacing the vehicles, skins and weapons therein, but DC-specific maps are sure to follow and when they do this already top-class mod will be an absolute essential for armchair generals everywhere. In fact, playing the Tobruk, El Alamein, Battleaxe or Gazala desert maps

is already somewhat spooky and *BF1942*'s fantastic multiplayer capability provides the icing on the cake. Being behind a sniper rifle is very lonely when the scope is full of RPG-toting soldiers running towards you.

Does *Desert Combat* have a fault? Well, apart from the helicopters being the devil's own job to fly and the enemy's use of weapons appearing much more accurate than in *BF1942*, then no. It's very, very good and while

few online servers carry it so far, single-player is fun (just don't ever get in an Apache when a bot is driving unless you want to die) and LAN games are enjoyable to the point of addiction. Version 3.0 is coming too...

**PCZONE VERDICT 91**  
Maps will make it perfect

## DEFENCE ALLIANCE 1.7 COMMUNITY EDITION

ON THE  
DVD

SIZE 96Mb REQUIRES Full version of Unreal Tournament

www.planetunreal.com/da/homepage.asp

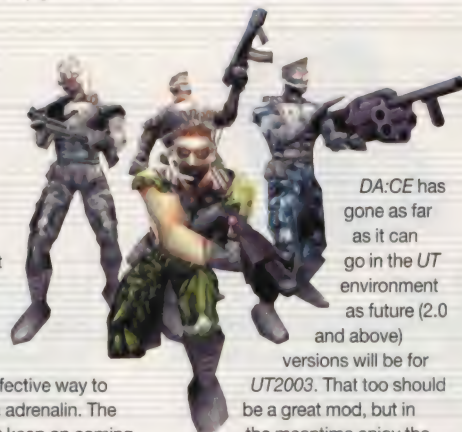


All quiet now, but another minute and all hell breaks loose...

**NOW HERE'S** an oddity. *Defence Alliance 1.7 Community Edition (DA:CE)* is a mod of a mod. It's the result of the development team handing out the code for their already highly enjoyable version 1.6 to the fans and giving them pretty much free reign to improve it – with the help of the DA team themselves. The resulting tweaked version is now full of many of the goodies that the fan community wanted to see, and makes for one of the best UT mods around.

The original *Defence Alliance* idea was simple – you and your buddies have to defend your base against a horde of

computer-generated monsters and hold out as long as possible – and proved to be an extremely effective way to overdose on adrenaline. The enemies just keep on coming, faster and faster, bigger and badder until, well, the inevitable slaughter. It's better when you have a team by your side, but even as a single-player you'll have a blast. The new human vs human mode introduced in *DA:CE* adds even more to this top-class mod.



*DA:CE* has gone as far as it can go in the UT environment as future (2.0 and above) versions will be for *UT2003*. That too should be a great mod, but in the meantime enjoy the frantic action, great maps and nerve-jangling gameplay that is *Defence Alliance UT*.

**PCZONE VERDICT 85**  
Brilliant. Can't wait for the UT2003 version!



# WILD WEST

## 1.12 + 1.13 PATCH

ON THE DVD SIZE 65Mb + 2Mb REQUIRES Full version of Return To Castle Wolfenstein  
[the-wildwest.co.uk/](http://the-wildwest.co.uk/)

**RETURN TO Castle Wolfenstein** is a good game, but it has never been a modifier's favourite. As a Total Conversion, Wild West is therefore a rarity but it makes a creditable stab at the western genre on the way.

WW is set at the end of the 19th century and gives players the opportunity to take on the role of cowboy or bandit in the badlands around the Mexico/US border. There are four classes of player for each team, with each class having its own variety of weapons, including the usual Colt pistol, muskets and even dynamite for when a bullet just won't do the job. Maps are

limited, but those available are big and quite well designed with a challenging set of objectives on each. They need more detail, as do the player and weapon skins (it's all a bit blocky at the moment), but show definite promise.

Sadly, Wild West is poorly supported online, but it makes for an enjoyable LAN game. It shows that RTCW can do a whole more than just drab grey and camouflage green.

**PCZONE VERDICT 75**  
 Young Guns forever



Maps are blocky, but show promise.



Drive these and you deserve a medal.

# G.I. JOE 1942

## ALPHA 1.1A

ON THE DVD SIZE 108Mb REQUIRES Full version of Return To Battlefield 1942  
[www.planetbattlefield.com/gi/main.htm](http://www.planetbattlefield.com/gi/main.htm)

**GI JOE** was the world's first action figure and is now the star of a BF1942 mod. He's blonde, blue-eyed, built like a brick outhouse, and if it weren't for the fact he's an all-American hero he'd make the perfect German.

Typical to his marketing, it's obvious where this mod is heading – right on an express train to Weirdsville. The weapons are overdubbed with effects from a Flash Gordon movie, and a

wide range of vehicles are present, ranging from motorbikes and jeeps to VTOL jets and mad autogyro contraptions. These are all wickedly fast and handle much more sharply than in the original game, meaning the bots get quickly confused and players familiar with ponderous Shermans and Panzers will oversteer like mad. The supplied maps do at least give you the space in which to practice.

Player skins are unchanged from BF1942, but later releases should fix that. Here the emphasis is on instant gratification rather than historical accuracy so the whole thing plays like a cartoon – which is just what the programmers were hoping for.

**PCZONE VERDICT 71**  
 Anatomically incorrect

# FOGMATCH

ON THE DVD SIZE 6K REQUIRES Full version of Unreal Tournament 2003  
[www.snout-clan.co.uk](http://www.snout-clan.co.uk)

AT 6K, FogMatch has to be the smallest mod ever to find its way onto these pages. It's a mutator for über-shooter UT2003 and despite its diminutive size it has a very big impact on gameplay. As its name suggests, it just adds fog to whichever map you happen to be playing – indoors or out – and this in one stroke makes sniper weapons and long-range rocket attacks pointless. After all, if you can't see it, you can't shoot it. Now the melee weapons come into their own as battles descend into a bloody, close-quarter scrap for survival. The player with the quickest reflexes wins.

What lets FogMatch down to some extent is that bots, not being hampered by the need for real eyes, don't know that the fog is there and therefore have a major advantage. They can still see you, and an attack can come as a very unpleasant surprise. The answer of course is either to keep moving, or only play in a LAN game, where the action comes in manic bursts of gunfire and from the dying player. Love it or loathe it, but give it a go.

**PCZONE VERDICT 60**  
 Deathmatch with your eyes shut



Action is immediate and frenzied.



# DISC PAGES

WORDS Dave Woods, Mark Eveleigh and Rhianna Pratchett

DISCS Mark Eveleigh

## HELP!

**CD trouble?** Don't worry – phone our helpline on **08700 711 482**. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email [pc\\_zone@interchange.co.uk](mailto:pc_zone@interchange.co.uk) BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

## MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a PIII 600MHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 2MX 32Mb graphics card and 128Mb RAM (256Mb recommended for Windows XP users) to run the software on these discs.

## DISCLAIMER

- This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

# CHASER

CD1/DVD Pub: JoWooD Developer: Cauldron

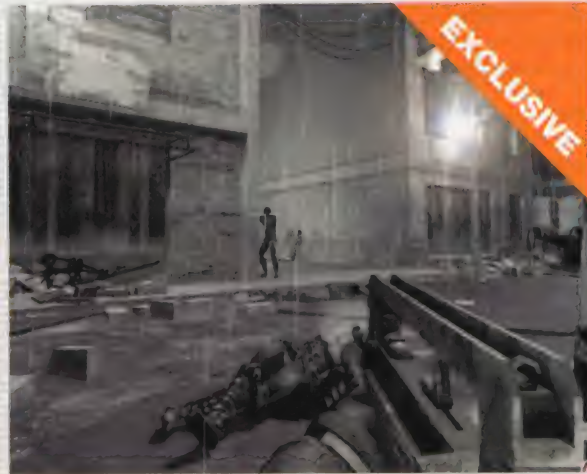


"Come on big boy, chase me, chase me!"

When it comes to first person shooters, everyone knows about the *Unreals*, *Quakes*, *Dooms* and *Half-Lives* of this world. There's even a rumour that there's a new *Duke Nukem* game in development, but we wouldn't know anything about that. Then there are the dark horses, the non-name games that turn up out of nowhere, looking promising.

Trouble is, most of them fail to deliver. But we reckon *Chaser* might be different.

Why? Because we've had playable code in the office, and as well as looking a bit tasty (and doing it the hard way by using its own CloakNT engine rather than licensing someone else's technology) it plays pretty well to boot. And, with another month or so to go until we get the review code, we've got sky-high hopes that all the little niggles will be ironed out (like the predictable but



The engine looks mighty fine and it plays a good game as well.

unerringly accurate AI, and the fact the enemy appears out of nowhere on occasions). Plus, *Chaser's* developers, Cauldron, are a pretty well-established group. You might not have heard of their games if you're a shooter-only man, but they were responsible for the way-more-than-half-decent *Battle Isle: The Androsia War*.

The playable demo we've got for you here is a pretty tough cookie as well. Giving you a whole single-player level called Little Tokyo, you have to start in the sewers and work your way up to the streets, at which point the shit really hits the fan. To help you out you can employ what's called Adrenalin mode, which works in a similar way to Bullet-Time in *Max Payne*. It only works for a limited amount of time but it switches the screen to black and white and slows everything down to give you the edge in particularly vicious gun battles. If you need more help check out the walkthrough below, or if you want to read more about the game, check out our exclusive preview starting on page 60.

## WALKTHROUGH →

CHASER'S NOT EASY, SO TO CUT TO THE CHASE, FOLLOW OUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE DEMO LEVEL



**1** You start off in the sewers. But before you encounter your first bad guy, it's a good time to have a look around! and marvel at the water effects of the new CloakNT engine (presuming you've got a half-decent graphics card). Then go shoot someone in the head.



**2** Clear the sewers carefully and watch out for blokes hiding behind crates. When you've cleared the area and can't work out where to go next, look out for the stairway to heaven. Actually, hell might be more appropriate, as this is when things start to get tough.



**3** When you get to the top, take out the chap on the roof opposite and then quickly look for the sniper to your right. Reload and then get ready to jump over the fence. This is a good time to switch to Adrenalin mode (you'll need to set the key through the Options screen).



**4** Move carefully through the streets taking cover where possible and using Adrenalin mode if things get tough. You're looking for a hole in the floor that takes you to the last section of the demo. There's only one more tricky spot – look for this pipe and you're nearly home.





What sort of a girly name is Team Rainbow, anyway?

# RAVEN SHIELD

**CD2/DVD Pub:** Ubi Soft **Dev:** Ubi Soft Montreal **Reviewed:** Issue 127 (84%)

The squad-based action genre has thinned out somewhat of late, with *SWAT 4* going AWOL and *Flashpoint 2* only a distant prospect. *Raven Shield* marks the latest title in the benchmark *Rainbow Six* series, and very much affirms the series' position as genre leader.

This demo contains a full single-player map with four modes, including Practice, Terrorist Hunt, Lone Wolf and Hostage

Rescue. You can customise the number of terrorists and the difficulty level you want to play at, and you also get to build your own team of ass-kicking counter-terrorists for the op. The new and improved mission planning mode allows you to move your teams from waypoint to waypoint, clearing areas to allow other teams to move around safely, without first having to take a cartography course.



Get up ladders as quickly as possible, especially if your team has sited a target in the area.

It's certainly more accessible than previous *Rainbow Six* games and seems to have a bit more pace than the likes of *Ghost Recon*, although this might well be down to the fact that you can cower behind your team mates and hope they kill the enemies with precision accuracy. You might want to make sure that you set up a sniper team to cover the large outdoor area around the train tracks so

your team can make an assault on the control room with the benefit of some covering fire. Going outside without sniper support in this part of the map can be deadly, especially as many terrorists will hide along the walkways.

So strap that MP5 over your shoulder, ready your team for combat and get going before the hostages see an untimely exit from this planet we call earth.



Before you die you see the ring.



Another Airfix space-station bites the space dust.

# FREELANCER

**CD 2/DVD Pub:** Microsoft **Dev:** Digital Anvil **Reviewed:** Issue 128 (84%)

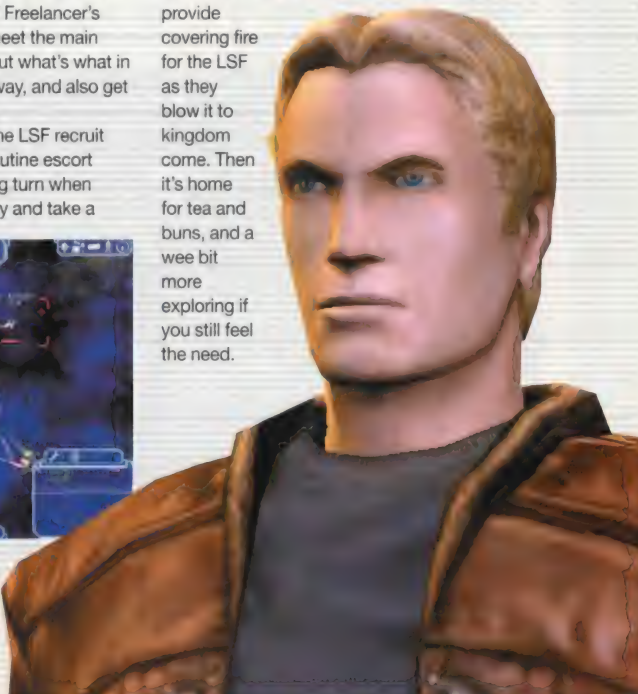
After surviving the destruction of the space station Freeport 7, pilot-for-hire Trent finds himself kicking around the New York system without a ship or a purpose. Our nifty playable demo, which picks up at this point, lets you guide Trent through the ensuing events, which are in fact the opening stages of *Freelancer's* single player campaign. You'll meet the main characters, learn a bit more about what's what in a decidedly *Wing Commander* way, and also get to kick some space-based butt.

Pretty soon, a group called the LSF recruit you to undertake a seemingly routine escort mission, which takes a surprising turn when some rogue ships turn up and try and take a

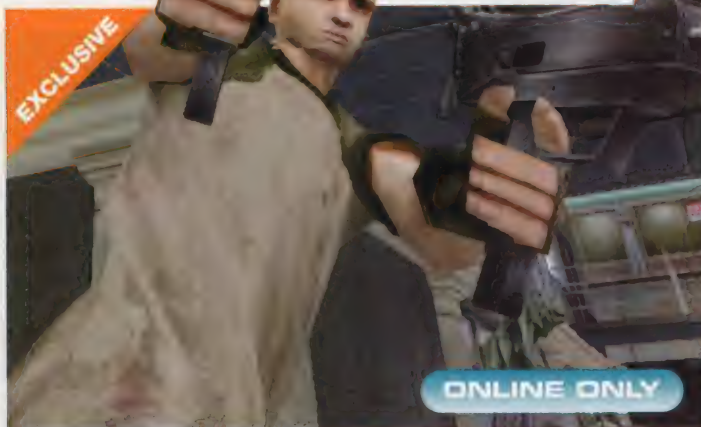
chunk out of your ass. Once these interstellar bandits have been given their marching orders, those silver-tongued LSF chaps talk you into tracking the fleeing brigands through a field of space debris to their base. Once you've honed in on their squalid little lair, the only thing left is to provide covering fire for the LSF as they blow it to kingdom come. Then it's home for tea and buns, and a wee bit more exploring if you still feel the need.



Formations and docking are now just a button click away.







It's a multiplayer game at heart, so get fragging.

## DEVASTATION

**CD2/DVD Pub:** NovaLogic **Dev:** Digitalo **Reviewed:** (Issue 129): 50%

*Devastation* promised so much and ultimately delivered so little (see our review page 84 for details) – in single-player mode at least. Multiplayer is a different kettle of guns, as you can see for yourself with this exclusive multiplayer demo. It's a pretty standard affair, so you don't have to worry about joining a game and getting flamed in the first five seconds as you try and get your bearings. Sporting both Deathmatch and Capture The Flag modes across two maps – Embarcadero Depot and Union Rail Yard – you can sample most of the weaponry on offer in

the full game, along with one of the more innovative items, the remote-controlled Rat Drone.

Even though the demo had only been out a few days as we were going to press, there were plenty of sub-100 ping servers up and running. Both game types were being played, and the action's a lot better than some of the other B-grade shooters that have been doing the rounds recently. Just fire the game up, choose to create or join a game, select the type of game you want to play and start shooting. It's, like, totally devastating, man.

## MISTMARE

**CD1/DVD Pub:** Mindscape **Dev:** Arxel tribe

What do you remember 1996 for? Tom Cruise dangling from the ceiling in *Mission Impossible*? Meat Loaf making a comeback? Geri Halliwell actually looking a normal shape? What you probably don't remember 1996 for is being a world where the whole of Europe hasn't gone through the Industrial Revolution and remains in the grip of war, and where a mysterious and deadly fog engulfs much of the land.

And that's because it's only happened in *Mistmare*, a 3D RPG where you play Isador, a sorcerer monk with a firm grasp of kung fu. In this demo you'll get to try out some of your moves while you explore one of the cities in the game and battle the unwieldy control system. Luckily the game has a quick restart system where you can tackle the same areas again with lower level monsters.



Go on, he's asking for it.



## FIGHTER ACE 3.5

**CD1/DVD Pub:** Jaleco Entertainment **Dev:** Jaleco Entertainment **Reviewed:** Issue 127 (85%)

This World War II massively multiplayer 3D flight-sim was one the surprise gems of issue 127. With a spirit reminiscent of *Air Warrior III*, *Fighter Ace 3.5* captured our online hearts with its lack of pretensions and its wonderful community spirit. Now you can get the opportunity to say, "Tally-Ho, chocks away and all that," and sample the aerial action for yourself in our exclusive online trial and offline demo. The offline demo will give you a good

grounding in flying a Spitfire LF Mk. Vb through 3 different sample arenas.

The three different areas are Arcade, Intermediate and Realistic, each with their own starting conditions and features such as realistic physics, blackouts and limited ammo and fuel. Once you've got to grips with the controls (you'll need a flight stick to get the real experience) you can try it out online and download the full client at [fighterace.jaleco.com](http://fighterace.jaleco.com)



It's all about getting a firm grip on the camshaft in your greasy cockpit.

## ENIGMA: RISING TIDE

**CD1/DVD Pub:** GMX Media **Dev:** Tesseract Games

If you fancy yourself as Sean Connery in *The Hunt For Red October*, or standing on the prow of a storm-tossed Corvette staring angst-ridden at the horizon, then get yourself some naval adventures in *Enigma: Rising Tide*.

There are none of your usual movement controls here. In fact, steering your nautical vehicle will be somewhat of a challenge as you will have very limited vision, and will have to steer using the compass, rudder and radar – particularly when you're commanding the submarine.

The demo contains two different modes of play. The first sees you aboard a LFN Badger-class Corvette, fighting off enemy ships and planes. The second dumps you in the very atmospheric *Excalibur* – the world's fastest submarine. This can get particularly eerie, especially when you get the warning the submarine is breaking apart and you just sit there listening to the sound of metal screeching and watching the cabin lights slowly dim.



Some dials. And valves.

### OTHER DEMOS ON THE CD/DVD

**ECHELON: WIND WARRIORS  
AND LASER SQUAD NEMESIS**



# DVD EXCLUSIVES

ONLY AVAILABLE ON PC ZONE'S DVD EDITION. TO SUBSCRIBE TURN TO PAGE 131

## DVD VIDEO



Prepare for the Viking invasion.

## MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR - VIKING INVASION

We've got a real treat for you this month with some of the first jaw-dropping footage of the awesome *Medieval: Total War - Viking Invasion*, the expansion for Creative Assembly's epic game. The video features some of the new units from the eight Viking era factions, which include Berserkers, Saxon Fyrdmen and Viking Thralls charging their way across Medieval's beautiful 3D landscape. The footage also shows some of the new features of the expansion such as flaming torch throwing and deep-frying your enemies with a well-timed pot of boiling oil.

## PCZONE'S ESSENTIAL NEW TOP 10

THIS MONTH SEES THE ADDITION OF OUR ESSENTIAL DEMOS SELECTION, WHICH IS EXCLUSIVELY AVAILABLE TO OUR DVD READERS. EVERY MONTH WE'LL BE BRINGING YOU OUR TOP TEN CHOICE OF THE BEST, THE FASTEST, THE MOST KNOCK-YOUR-SOCKS-OFF DEMOS OUT THERE, WHICH WE'LL CONTINUOUSLY UPDATE.

**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4**  
**SPLINTER CELL**  
**UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003**  
**AGE OF MYTHOLOGY**  
**ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2**

**PLUS! NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2, VIETCONG, BLITZKRIEG, TOCA RACE DRIVER AND PRAETORIANS!**



### PATCHES

**Black & White v1.30**  
Championship Manager 4 Enhancement Pack 1  
**Command & Conquer: Generals v1.05**  
Delta Force: Black Hawk Down Update  
Highland Warriors Update  
Shadowbane v1.01  
Starcraft v1.01

### MOVIES

Planetside  
Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic

### MODWATCH

Desert Combat 0.2

## DVD DEMOS

# RESTAURANT EMPIRE

DVD Pub: Nobilis Dev: Enlight

This month our DVD readers will get the opportunity to try their hand at being a budding restaurateur in *Restaurant Empire*, a part strategy sim and part RPG, which gives you the chance to run your own establishment. You play Armand, a surprisingly slim-tongued young man who never goes anywhere without his puffy white chef's hat. In the demo Armand is given the chance to re-open his uncle's Parisian restaurant Treize a Table.

You'll have to start by furnishing your restaurant with some tasteful décor so your punters have something interesting to look at when they're chowing down on your grub. You then have to choose some of the delightful dishes you want to appear on your menu. Once that's done and you've fulfilled all the other requirements such as staffing, you'll be ready to fling your doors open to the unwary public.



In the full game you'll get to create your own themed restaurants.

# STAR WRAITH 3

DVD Pub: Star Wraith 3D games Dev: Star Wraith 3D games

If designing menus isn't your thing fire up *Star Wraith 3* for a bit of space-sim combat action. In this demo you have to choose your primary guns and missiles for the basic F-144E space ship, which you then pilot through a training mission. This is where you'll get to grips with the controls for combat and other features, such as automatic lock-in. Then it's off to the Alpha-Centuri system to test out your skills against a selection of the local nasties.



The automatic lock-in is a god send.

Defence Alliance 1.7 -  
Community Edition  
**Wild West 1.12**  
Gl Joe 1942  
Fogmatch

### SCREENSHOT PACKS

Rise of Nations  
Commandos 3: Destination Berlin  
Fair Strike  
IndyCar Series

### EXTENDED PLAY

Cheatstation  
Fight Club  
IGI 2 UK Jungle Upgrade

IGI 2 Standalone Dedicated server  
**IGI 2 Safe Mode Patch**  
IGI 2 Music Preview  
**IGI 2 Chris Ryan Interview**  
Ghost Recon Smart tools v1.0  
**New World order Map Pack**  
Unreal Tournament 2003 v2199  
**UT 2003 Bonus Pack**  
Battlefield 1942: Operation Aberdeen Map  
**Battlefield 1942 v1.31**  
America's Army v1.6 Web Link

**PLUS, ESSENTIAL PATCHES, DRIVES AND PROGRAMS FOR ALL YOUR GAMING NEEDS!**



# FIGHT CLUB



What went down at the **PC ZONE Free-For-All**? Lots of beer, among other things. **Martin Korda** fills you in on all the humorous happenings



ShitKicker! That's him. No, not the last man standing – the CT with a crate for a head. Fool.

**THE MARCH 27** Free-For-All was notable for many things. Action, intensity, insults, annoyingly good players killing us from the other side of the level, and humour. Yes, humour. In one particularly chucklesome moment on *Militia*, the terrorists were enjoying such supremacy that they all converged around the bar, and Spectra (one of this month's star players) served them all beers.

And yes, they still managed to win the level. It's this kind of camaraderie which has made the last few Free-For-Alls all the more enjoyable and long may it continue.

Star players of the month from this shootout were [TNC] Spectra; [TNC] Morph; [TNC] E1ectricity; logix; Mas.ter; noobled; Patch @ Combat LANd[staff]; Etr0x; Bp I Mrcaffeine; and hairy\_monster. Well done to you all, but special

congratulations must go out to logix and Mas.ter who are our second and third entrants in the **PC ZONE** Hall of Fame. Want to join them? Well you know what you've got to do (get mentioned in these pages five times, for those of you who don't know). Better still, get practicing now on one of our public servers (details below). See you all online, and mine's a pint of Stella.

## FREE-FOR-ALL

### THURSDAY MAY 29

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Counter-Strike

## HALL OF FAME

Earn five mentions and you'll have your name immortalised. Our three star players so far are...

**K.I.T**  
logix  
Mas.ter

## KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	Kid Unknown
Richie Shoemaker	Zapatero
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Mark Hill	Leatherface
Paul Presley	I R Baboon
Lee Cocker	Viper
Phil Clark	ShitKicker
Danny King-Smith	Ronin
Colin Mackleworth	M.A.C.H.I.N.E.
Jamie Malcolm	BraveArt

## FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

Connecting to our server has always been simple. And to make things even easier, we've given it a permanent home. To hook up from within the game, open the *Half-Life* console and type 'password pczone' and then press enter. After this, type 'connect pczone2.jolt.co.uk' and press enter. You'll be taken right there. You can also add the server to popular game browsers such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy 3D by entering [pczone2.jolt.co.uk](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk) where you would normally provide an IP address. Check our forum ([www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)) for any information updates.

## PC ZONE GAME SERVERS POWERED BY JOLT.CO.UK

OUR SERVERS ARE OPEN 24/7 AND FREE OF CHARGE. WHY PLAY ANYWHERE ELSE?

We've switched our game servers to the ultra-fast Jolt service, which means lag should now be a thing of the past. We've also changed the way you find them, and from now on, we'll refer to them by their name rather than by their address. The easiest way to connect is to load the game you wish

PC Zone Game Servers Powered By Jolt.co.uk

PC Zone CS #1 [Popular] – [pczone.jolt.co.uk:27015](http://pczone.jolt.co.uk:27015)

PC Zone CS #2 [Dusty] – [pczone.jolt.co.uk:27025](http://pczone.jolt.co.uk:27025)

PC Zone CS #3 [Custom] – [pczone.jolt.co.uk:27035](http://pczone.jolt.co.uk:27035)

Team Fortress Classic Public Server [24hr 2fort]:  
[pczone.jolt.co.uk:27045](http://pczone.jolt.co.uk:27045)

Natural Selection [1.04]: [pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27025](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27025)

to play, go to the multiplayer connection screen, and instead of typing in an IP address, enter the name of the server from the list below. They can also be accessed from a server browser such as The All-Seeing Eye or GameSpy. Remember to use the password below, which is updated each month.

PC Zone Q3 [OSP] – [pczone.jolt.co.uk:27960](http://pczone.jolt.co.uk:27960)

PC Zone BF1942 [CTF] – [pczone2.jolt.co.uk:14567](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:14567)

PC Zone UT2003 [Team] – [pczone2.jolt.co.uk:7777](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:7777)

PC Zone RTCW [1.4] – [pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27960](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27960)

FreeForAll Server – [pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27015](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27015)

PASSWORD: foul

## LAN ROVER

LAN LORD STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL KNOWS WHERE THE PARTY'S AT

After the overload of LANs last month, May has all the organisers pausing for breath before they start campaigning for your support of their summer LANs. As a result, I have only found four LANs for you to visit this month; but they are on different dates, so you could manage to pop in to them all.

■ [www.roweb.co.uk](http://www.roweb.co.uk) are holding Combat 35 – The Cuckoo Has Landed from May 2-4, which coincides with the local village fair. So expect a certain

amount of local-brewed cider to be drunk. It costs £25.00, and if you turn up in WWII uniform, you get entered into a bonus prize draw.

■ Details are rather hard to come by at [www.warlan.net](http://www.warlan.net), but the Warlan team are organising a tournament in Fareham on May 5 2003. They are expecting up to 300 people to compete for £1,000 cash money. They also enjoy a net connection for those all-important downloads. If you can't get details online, you can phone 0800 081 1821 for further information.

■ On May 18, the Holiday Inn at Northop Hall in Wales sees yet another regular one-day event for the [www.flinfrag.co.uk](http://www.flinfrag.co.uk) team. It costs £10.00 for the day, and, game-wise, anything goes.

■ On May 31, an event is being organised by [www.triggerhappyplans.co.uk](http://www.triggerhappyplans.co.uk) for up to 40 people at £15.00 a head, with a buffet-style nosebag.

■ If you want me to mention your LAN, give me at least two months' notice and send details to [scalper@ggla.co.uk](mailto:scalper@ggla.co.uk) and I'll do what I can to give you a mention.



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You will be able to view your details online at [www.subsinfo.co.uk](http://www.subsinfo.co.uk)

**Return your completed application to: PC ZONE SUBSCRIPTIONS, FREEPOST WD7, BRISTOL BS32 0ZZ** (no stamp required)



# WIN! DEVASTATING LINE-UP OF NOVALOGIC GUBBINS!

Look at this! We've persuaded publisher Novalogic to abandon all reason and give us enough goodies to sink the Titanic

**THE WORLD'S** cities have become lawless and decrepit. Mega-corporations hold power, and ruthless paramilitaries patrol the streets. When the future is looking so bleak, you may as well share the wealth in the here and now. Which is exactly what we convinced UK publisher Novalogic to do to coincide with the release of its bleak, post-apocalyptic shooter *Devastation*, due out April 18. A top-notch BMX bike, limited edition skateboards and T-shirts, copies of *Devastation*, *Highland Warriors* and *Black Hawk Down* - it's all your Christmases come early.

Reviewed on page 84 and combining the *Unreal* graphics engine with a realistic physics system, *Devastation* pits you, as the leader of a rag-tag resistance army, against the cruel syndicates and their corporate militias through city after city with the aim of delivering the world from their heartless yoke. Loosely translated, you have to shoot, bomb and blast your way through 22 single-player and 14 multiplayer maps using a huge array of more than 40 death-dealing weapons.

Anyway, if you fancy sampling this nihilistic futurescape, or any of the tons of other cool stuff we've got piled up ready to give away, simply divert your eyes to the question below, send us an answer and then cross your fingers and hope for the best.



## HOW TO ENTER

WRITE THE ANSWER TO THIS SIMPLE QUESTION ON THE BACK OF A POSTCARD:

**WHICH KIND OF WEAPON IS LIKELY TO CAUSE MORE DEVASTATION IF UNLEASHED UPON A INVADING RACE OF ALIENS?**

- A A Spam javelin
- B A man-cannon
- C A neutron bomb

Send your entry to: NOVALOGIC RAGTAG RESISTANCE Competition, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland St, London, W1T 4JD. (Closing date: May 29 2003)

- Title, Forename, Surname, Address, Postcode, Daytime phone number and your e-mail address
- Please indicate on the postcard if you do not

wish to receive details of further special offers from companies other than Dennis Publishing Ltd

- Please indicate on the postcard if you are under 18 years of age
- Please indicate on the postcard if you are you a current subscriber

**Terms and conditions:** Only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be eligible for the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes are non-transferable. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and regulations apply. And so it is. Good luck!



## UP FOR GRABS

NOVALOGIC GRAND GIVEAWAY

1<sup>ST</sup>  
PRIZE

First out of the hat wins... a BMX Mongoose Villain worth £300, a *Devastation*-branded skateboard, a copy of *Devastation*, a copy of *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, a copy of *Highland Warriors*, a *Devastation* T-shirt, and a *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* soundtrack CD

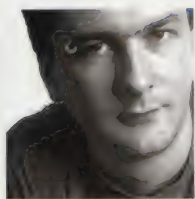
THE NEXT FOUR OUT OF THE HAT WIN... A *DEVASTATION*-BRANDED SKATEBOARD, A COPY OF *DEVASTATION*, A COPY OF *DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN*, A COPY OF *HIGHLAND WARRIORS*, A *DEVASTATION* T-SHIRT, AND A *DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN* SOUNDTRACK CD

THE NEXT FIVE OUT OF THE HAT WIN... A COPY OF *DEVASTATION*, A COPY OF *DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN*, A COPY OF *HIGHLAND WARRIORS*, AND A *DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN* SOUNDTRACK CD

...AND THE FINAL TEN OUT OF THE HAT MAKE DO WITH... A COPY OF *DEVASTATION*







# MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

■ FRIGHTENINGLY BEAUTIFUL Dave Woods



## THIRD TIME UNLUCKY

Can you tell me when the REAL version of *Master Of Orion 3* (MOO3) is due to be released? I've got this box on my shelf with a couple of CDs and a booklet inside that claims to be the long-awaited sequel to MOO2, but when I installed it I was faced with a completely incomprehensible user interface, dodgy AI, extremely poor micro and macro-management options and possibly the worst "Diplomacy" I've ever seen between a player and CPU players in a game. It's like

playing with Microsoft Excel, but without the excitement. I haven't even mentioned the real-time 3D space combat, which turns out to be a bunch of nearly invisible tiny dots fighting a load of other infinitesimal tiny dots, with the odd beam flashing across the screen – and the player with no idea what on Earth is going on.

Frankly, I'm angry, and I'm not the only one. Quicksilver has taken a much beloved concept and perverted it beyond recognition – this "game" bears no relation whatsoever to MOO1 or MOO2 and, frankly, I'm thinking of contacting the Trade Descriptions people to report Quicksilver. So – it must be a joke. The REAL version of MOO3 has to be out soon – doesn't it?

Andrew J Summersgill

If something ain't broke why do people insist on fixing it? Bah!

## OUTGOING

Correct me if I'm wrong, but was someone in ZONE (issue 127) in a worse state than George Best's liver. In the Charts Incoming section *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* is apparently coming out twice in March by two different publishers. I also noticed that *Star Trek: Elite Force 2* is coming out in May and in June. Call me a picky little bastard. Actually don't. Anyway, keep up the good work. You always have done so far.

James

'Grouch' Murrell

It's called hedging our bets. Actually it's called having a news editor having a ball in the 'US of A' looking at *Deus Ex: Invisible War* when he should have been going over his Bulletin section with a fine toothcomb. (So that makes it your

fault Dave? – Jamie.) Normal service has now been resumed.

## 10 PRINT: "SHOOT COP"

Just got your latest issue with *Vice City* on the cover and when I looked at the preview I was like "wow!" This game looks stunning. Just one question though, am I going to have to upgrade my 1GHz PC to play it properly, or will I get it home, load it up and find out that my PC will only support a text-only version?

Ben Haster

We contacted Rockstar to see what they had to say for themselves. Here's their response. "It depends on the video card. With a 1GHz processor, we'd suggest a GeForce3 card for it to play nicely. We wouldn't expect it to play well above 800x600 with a minimum spec machine."

## YESTERYEAR

Your 10th birthday issue made me come over all weepy. I had an Amiga when I first bought PC ZONE and I was waiting for

EF2000 to be released. It didn't appear so I ended up buying ZONE and reading and rereading your review. Inevitably, I ended up buying a Pentium 133MHz (speed demon!) and selling the Amiga for 500 big ones. The game was brilliant on the PC (eventually it did get released for the Amiga, but was pants). So it's all your fault. Three PC systems later I still subscribe to PC ZONE and always wait for a game to be reviewed in the magazine before purchasing it.

Gavin Hay

It's funny to think it's been ten years since *Doom* was released. In fact, it only seems like yesterday that I was bunking off Uni to play *Speedball* on my trusty Amiga. Sniff, sniff, you're starting me off now...

## COLOUR ME BLOOD RED

Ain't that *Doom 3* looking good? My mum has just seen the art print that came with the 10th anniversary issue and mentioned that "it made her feel ill". And after looking at it, I can see where she's coming from, because it looks so real! Marvel at how the volumetric smoke



Will the real MOO3 please stand up?

## GOT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR EMAIL LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

WIN!  
A TOP  
SOUND  
CARD

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new soundcard courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Audigy 2 Platinum has been firmly ensconced in our Buyer's Guide since its release, and is the best gaming card you can currently buy.



Not long to go until *Vice City* is unleashed.



**"I want to know why are frighteningly beautiful men dropping at her feet? And what the hell are frighteningly beautiful men anyway?"**

**BILLY G HAS A QUERY ABOUT BLOODRAYNE**



**Doom 3:** We still haven't played it but we're expecting to real soon...

really makes that chainsaw look brutal! Gasp at how the rag-doll physics ensure that the dismembered corpses sit properly! Go "wow" at how the blood is scattered realistically around the place, and looks like real blood as well! All dark red and everything!

Now, is it possible for id to now show us some gameplay? No? Ah, OK then, lets just look at more characters with more polygons than you can shake a large stick at, safe in the knowledge that *Doom 3* will be the biggest gaming event ever, and that it won't play like a pig wallowing in its own filth.

Matthew Hartfield.

The world's biggest games show, E3, is just around the corner (May 15-17) and we're hoping/ praying that we're going to get our hands on playable code in LA. You'll be the first to hear about it if we do.



## MAN JUICE

I'll get the niceties out of the way first. I love the magazine and buy it each month as it provides the best combination of previews, reviews and infantile humour I can find on the shelf. Now to cut to the chase. On the backpage of issue 127 you ran the advert for *BloodRayne* and I want to know why are 'frighteningly beautiful men dropping at her feet?' What the hell are 'frighteningly beautiful men' anyway? Am I harbouring some strange homoerotic fantasy if I buy this game? The 'driven by pure lust' bit I can follow from the picture although it does look as if she's just broken wind and that's caused them to 'drop'.

Billy G

What are frighteningly beautiful men? Take a look at page 66 - there are a couple of prime examples. Check out our preview on page 54 if you want to know more about the game. [PZ]

## BACKCHAT

▲ THE BEST OF THE CHAT FROM THE PCZONE FORUM THIS MONTH. GET INVOLVED AT [WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK](http://WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK)

If you hadn't noticed, the world's at war again, but amid the 24-hour wall-to-wall coverage of half-truths and rumours there's still room for a bit of quality journalism. **LordFink** found the following extract about war and videogames on the Guardian website. "A generation of children born into the end of the Cold War and the peace dividend now finds itself, shockingly, at war. Young people reared on the casually gleeful killing in computer games are faced with the prospect of the real thing, and finding it not the same... Perhaps this war will be a milestone in videogame history, proving once and for all that a simple hobby does not destroy the ability to anticipate the consequences of ones actions; I would go so far as to say that it improves it." Good man.

For some though the war, despite only being a week old, was passé. **Daz101** was already looking into the future franchises: "In 40 years or so the so-called 'accurate' Hollywood production ppl will make a film based on the current war in Iraq, showing the Americans going in to save the day without even one British marine in sight. They've done it before like in *Saving Private Ryan*... Tossers." **Wildpods** agreed wholeheartedly posting "and they can't even say tomato properly... wtf?"

The forum's a great place for instant feedback, so we followed the *PC ZONE Lift Up* thread closely. Here are some of the more sensible suggestions. **PeachFUZZ** wants to see a "bitch" section, "a page dedicated to readers spouting off. Something far more vitriolic than mailbox. Proper rants, preferably without foundation and ideally libellous." That'll be the forum then.

Someone had to do it, but we were just surprised it took you until the 4th page to demand the return of Charlie Brooker. Cheers **Paulky**, but you're going to have to get over it. He's moved on to bigger and, erm, bigger things. And, after getting all serious on us earlier, **LordFink** returned to the gutter: "We have game news and reviews... we have hardware tips... the only thing that's missing from the equation of a perfect magazine is a little bit of tasteful erotica." The rest of his post is unfit to print and it might have given Rhianna ideas. You'll have to check online for the unexpurgated version.

What's your idea of a perfect Friday night?

**Bossanova29** doesn't ask for much: "The wife's gone out, fridge is full of beer and *Raven Shield* to play... Bliss!" Trouble is he was back a bit later: "How hard is this game? I'll tell you, its very, very hard. Adds to the atmosphere and all that but there's hard and there's f\*\*\*\*\* hard." Well there's always the beer. And with **Ruined** making a return to the forum this month it seemed churlish to end this column without a quick plug for his website and band: [www.neck79.com](http://www.neck79.com). If you make it big remember where it all started...

They say tomado  
we say tomato.  
Let's call  
the whole  
thing  
off.





# THE PCZONE A-LIST

## SHOOTERS

### UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING



Little can compare with the sublime beauty of *Unreal II*. The graphics are jaw-dropping, and the absolute pinnacle of what every FPS in the last year has been aiming for, only to never quite achieve. The arsenal of weaponry at your disposal is imaginative and satisfying to wield, while the sound effects, music – and even the voice acting – all exude quality. Quite simply, you can't go wrong.

PUB Atari DEV Legend Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 126

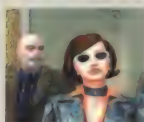


#### MEDAL OF HONOR

It's taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of toppling *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes.

PUB EA DEV 2015

PCZ ISSUE 112



#### NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and genuinely funny – and it doesn't treat you like an idiot.

PUB Black Label Games DEV Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 122



#### HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi DEV Valve Software

PCZ ISSUE 71



#### UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Not a million miles away from the last *UT* title, *UT2003* does however make leaps and bounds graphically. With finely balanced weapons, smart bots and diverse maps it's the reigning king of speed fragging.

PUB Infogrames DEV Digital Extremes

PCZ ISSUE 122



#### MAFIA

From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this game borrows from every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere and great AI – it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion

PCZ ISSUE 119



#### JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first *Star Wars* game to be awarded a *PC ZONE* Classic award since the original *Jedi Knight* back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 115



#### SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

The bloodiest game in the world is back, but this time there's a brilliant game covering beneath the carnage. Sublime AI is the chief culprit and if you can stomach the violence this is a must buy.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 118



#### ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension *AvP2* would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.

PUB Vivendi DEV Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 110



#### BATTLEFIELD 1942

Even though it features a disappointing and heavily bugged single-player campaign, *Battlefield* is one of the most compelling team-based multiplayer games ever. A must have for any online shooter fan.

PUB EA DEV Digital Illusions

PCZ ISSUE 121

## STRATEGY

### MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

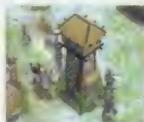


A sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available on budget), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this.

PUB Activision

DEV Creative Assembly

PCZ ISSUE 120



#### AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The *Age Of* series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail throughout and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere, plus it includes a decent map editor.

PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios

PCZ ISSUE 123

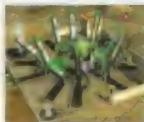


#### WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

**NEW ENTRY** *Warrior Kings* was one of the most compelling and diverse RTS games we'd seen. This second chapter, which focuses around skirmish play, offers more units, varied tech trees and challenging AI generals.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Black Cactus

PCZ ISSUE 128



#### COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

The C&C series comes of age in this 3D orgy of scud missiles, daisy-cutter bombs and nuclear strikes. *Generals* is a superb looking game with well designed sides that offers fun in spades.

PUB EA DEV EA Pacific/Westwood

PCZ ISSUE 127



#### COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

PUB Eidos DEV Pyro Studio

PCZ ISSUE 108



#### COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV DEV GSC GameWorld

PCZ ISSUE 101

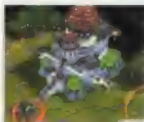


#### Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

*Z* will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yr-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb and, as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB EON DEV Bitmap Brothers

PCZ ISSUE 101



#### ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWood DEV Nival Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 112



#### WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, *Warcraft III* is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

PUB VU Games DEV Blizzard

PCZ ISSUE 119



#### BATTLE REALMS

Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely ground-breaking strategy game. It does have its flaws which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Liquid Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 111



Welcome to the **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers.

## ◀ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ▶

### DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his magnum opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.

PUB Eidos DEV Ion Storm  
PCZ ISSUE 93



#### THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Bethesda Softworks  
PCZ ISSUE 117



#### NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The makers of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series prove they are still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.

PUB Infogrames DEV Bioware  
PCZ ISSUE 118



#### PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorch of an RPG.

PUB Interplay DEV Black Isle Studio  
PCZ ISSUE 87



#### DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.

PUB Microsoft DEV Gas Powered Games  
PCZ ISSUE 115



#### SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games  
PCZ ISSUE 80



#### BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.

PUB Interplay DEV Bioware  
PCZ ISSUE 96



#### DIVINE DIVINITY

This epic RPG contains the action of *Diablo II* combined with the storyline of the *Baldur's Gate* series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay certainly isn't.

PUB CDV DEV Larian Studios  
PCZ ISSUE 121



#### FREEDOM FORCE

Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and beasty of RPGs, but *Freedom Force* is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.

PUB EA DEV Irrational Games  
PCZ ISSUE 115



#### ARX FATALIS

This is a graphically beautiful role-playing game with more than a few hints of *Ultima Underworld*. Its hugely detailed and realistic environment made this a *PC ZONE* Essential.

PUB VU Games DEV Monolith  
PCZ ISSUE 122

## ◀ ACTION/ADVENTURE ▶

### SPLINTER CELL



At long last we've got a new king of the action adventures with the Tom Clancy influenced *Splinter Cell*, and a new crown prince of stealth in the form of the über flexible Sam Fisher. *Splinter Cell* features the perfect blend of action, structure and pace, combined with some of the best visuals and set pieces around. No self-respecting gamer should miss out on this.

PUB Ubi Soft  
DEV Ubi Soft Montreal  
PCZ ISSUE 125



#### GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre.

PUB Activision DEV LucasArts  
PCZ ISSUE 71



#### SILENT HILL 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

Survival horror games have truly come of age with this superbly creepy and atmospheric offering from Japan. From the lovingly-smeared blood and grime to the terrifying use of ambient sound, it's a class act.

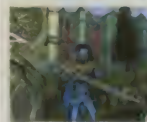
PUB Konami DEV Konami  
PCZ ISSUE 126



#### METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

A convincing PC conversion that adds tankerloads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original. There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakeast.

PUB Konami DEV Konami  
PCZ ISSUE 127



#### SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.

PUB Eidos DEV Crystal Dynamics  
PCZ ISSUE 111



#### DISCWORLD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.

PUB Infogrames DEV Perfect Entertainment  
PCZ ISSUE 79



#### THE THING

Drawing on some brilliant raw material from John Carpenter's classic horror movie, this survival action horror picks up the story where the film left off. It's one of the best film spin-offs around, with tense atmosphere and good gameplay.

PUB Black Label Games DEV Computer Artworks  
PCZ ISSUE 121



#### PRISONER OF WAR

One of the most original games available with a light-hearted setting and an atmospheric soundtrack, which makes it more of an adventure than an action title. *POW* makes a refreshing change from the usual mass slaughter fare.

PUB Codemasters DEV Wide Games  
PCZ ISSUE 121



#### HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

The revamped *Hitman* engine is nothing short of breathtaking, blessing the sequel with gorgeous graphics that fit well with the refined controls and superbly realistic AI. *Hitman 2* is solid and enjoyable with a great sense of gameplay freedom.

PUB Eidos DEV IO  
PCZ ISSUE 121



#### SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system.

PUB Codemasters DEV Rebel Act Studios  
PCZ ISSUE 98



## ◀ GOD GAMES ▶

## BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.

PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios  
PCZ ISSUE 100

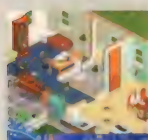


### CIVILIZATION III

*Civilization III* sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Infogrames DEV Firaxis Games

PCZ ISSUE 111



### THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA

PCZ ISSUE 87



### CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games DEV Impressions

PCZ ISSUE 70

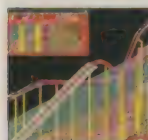


### EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historical campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.

PUB VU Games DEV Breakaway Games

PCZ ISSUE 121

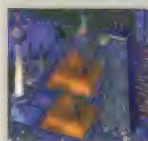


### ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

As utterly absorbing as its predecessor, *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2* once again revolves around designing and managing your own theme park. This version also allows you to design individual rides as well as including a handful of real-life coasters. Detailed and addictive.

PUB Infogrames DEV Chris Sawyer

PCZ ISSUE 123



### SIMCITY 4

The latest outing of the best-selling city building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately there are no huge leaps forward in gameplay, but there are plenty of features such as regional cities, imported characters from *The Sims* and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.

PUB EA DEV Maxis

PCZ ISSUE 125



### MONOPOLY TYCOON

This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real-time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUB Infogrames DEV Deep Red

PCZ ISSUE 110

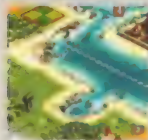


### DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog

PCZ ISSUE 79



### CALL TO POWER II

It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. It's still well worth seeking out.

PUB Activision DEV Activision

PCZ ISSUE 98

## ◀ SPACE COMBAT ▶

## FREELANCER



**NEW ENTRY** This is the first game for years to actually make an effort to refine the space-simulation genre, even if it doesn't manage to radically re-shape it. *Freelancer* combines the epic open-endedness of the classic *Elite* world with the combat immediacy of the *Wing Commander* series. It also mixes in a well-played out (if somewhat short) story and gorgeous graphics to come up with a thoroughly engaging and atmospheric experience.

PUB Microsoft DEV Digital Anvil

PCZ ISSUE 128



### X - GOLD

The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. It rewards patience with variety and months of absorbing gameplay. Deeply hypnotic and beautiful rather than tense and frenetic.

PUB THQ DEV Egosoft

PCZ ISSUE 82



### TERMINUS

Who says the days of bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and passion, and we reckon it just edges out the mighty *FreeSpace 2*.

PUB www.macgames.co.uk DEV Vicarious Visions

PCZ ISSUE 93



### Freespace 2

Following in the footsteps of *Wing Commander* and *X-Wing*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. With an epic story and amazing graphics, it suffers from being a bit short-lived if you don't play online.

PUB Interplay DEV Volition Inc

PCZ ISSUE 84



### EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

This title is likely to appeal more to the die-hard space simmers, but *Edge Of Chaos* still goes some way towards advancing the genre. Its graphics and absorbing freeform gaming are inspirational.

PUB Infogrames DEV Particle Systems

PCZ ISSUE 104

## ◀ DRIVING GAMES ▶

## GRAND THEFT AUTO III



It may have taken its time getting onto the PC, but *Grand Theft Auto III* was definitely worth the wait. Offering you both traditional linear missions and a wonderfully freeform world ripe for exploring, the game boasts stunning graphics and superb attention to detail. It's a great spin on both the driving and shooting genres and we can assure you that you'll love this noisy orgy of violence and speed. Crime really does pay.

PUB Take 2 DEV Rockstar

PCZ ISSUE 117



### TOCA RACE DRIVER

**NEW ENTRY** A storyline mode and one of the most realistic damage models we've ever seen, are just some of the added knobs on this *TOCA* game. The huge selection of tracks and cars available makes for a superb driving experience.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 119



### GRAND PRIX 4

You won't find a more accurate racing sim. Graphically lush and full of anal detail, Geoff Crammond's latest effort offers in-depth telemetry and a staggering number of options. *Grand Prix 4* is leading the grid in the world of racing sims.

PUB Infogrames DEV Simergy

PCZ ISSUE 119



### COLIN MCRAE 2.0

This is still the benchmark rally title and looks set to remain so until *Colin McRae 3.0* appears. The graphics are fantastic, the detail is overwhelming and the cars handle beautifully. So if you are on the look-out for the definitive rally game, this is it.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 110



### CRAZY TAXI

One of the best arcade conversions to the PC that we've seen for a long time. *Crazy Taxi* is a bright, colourful and in-yer-face driving experience that's built on solid arcade values and good old-fashioned insanity.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Hitmaker/Strangelite

PCZ ISSUE 119



## FLIGHT SIMS ▶

### IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES



**NEW ENTRY** Much of what has been improved with this sequel to *IL-2 Sturmovik* has been done under the virtual bonnet of the game. Improved AI, more accurate flight models and more of a realistic overall experience, plus more campaigns and even more planes. All of this adds up to make a truly exhilarating flying experience. Put simply, we think *IL-2: Forgotten Battles* is one of the finest flight sims ever.

**PUB** Ubi Soft **DEV** 1C: Madox Games **PCZ** ISSUE 128

#### MS FLIGHT SIM 2002



With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight loggings and improved graphics. It might not be able to teach you how to fly, but it's the closest you'll get without paying for lessons.

**PUB** Microsoft **DEV** BAO **PCZ** ISSUE 111

#### BATTLE OF BRITAIN



Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!

**PUB** Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software **PCZ** ISSUE 103

#### FALCON 4



We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.

**PUB** Infogrames **DEV** Microprose **PCZ** ISSUE 72

#### B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH



*B-17* reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.

**PUB** Infogrames **DEV** Wayward Simulations **PCZ** ISSUE 96

## 3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

### OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky *Red Hammer* add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

**PUB** Codemasters **DEV** Bohemia Interactive

**PCZ** ISSUE 104

#### RAVEN SHIELD



All the style and presentation you would expect from a Tom Clancy game, from the realism of the weapons down to footprints in the snow. A tactical and atmospheric game that can be frustratingly tricky at times.

**PUB** Ubi Soft **DEV** Ubi Soft Montreal **PCZ** ISSUE 127

#### HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: DELUXE



This revamp of *H&D* removes all of the infamous bugs from the original, as well as including three extra campaigns. There's been a lot of work put in to improving the graphics and modding fans will relish the new editor that ships with this edition.

**PUB** Take 2 **DEV** Illusion Softworks **PCZ** ISSUE 115

#### HOSTILE WATERS



A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Comander*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

**PUB** Rage **DEV** Rage Software **PCZ** ISSUE 101

#### GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO



This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.

**PUB** Interplay **DEV** Planet Moon Studios **PCZ** ISSUE 95

## ALL-TIME CLASSICS ▶

### DAVID BAILEY, DIRECTOR AT BLACK CACTUS SHARES HIS TOP TEN CLASSIC GAMING GREATS



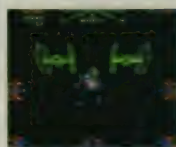
#### SYSTEM SHOCK 2 (PC)

One night when playing *SS2* I was crawling through the hydroponics lab, was down to three rounds and injured. The underground train I was in got stuck in a tunnel. The lights went out. It was raw, gut-wrenching fear. Despite the stupid platformer antics at the end, *SS2* changed everything I ever believed about games.



#### SEGA RALLY (DREAMCAST)

Because waiting for pizza deliveries requires quick thrills. My DC was always somewhat of a red-headed stepchild in the living room, but then I found I could power slide an Integrale. I had owned three real Lancias, and now I had the one I always wanted and could crash it into rocks. Splendid!



#### STAR WARS (ARCADE)

I was a student, and this monstrous machine arrived in the common room. Within a few weeks I was nearly £100 poorer. This game was great because you were actually allowed to 'use the force'. If you got into some zen-like zone you knew you could beat the Empire single-handedly. Controls, graphics and sound were spot on too.



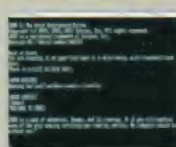
#### DEFENDER (ARCADE)

Just because, dammit! Sometimes I find myself with the urge to blow lots of little things up. Especially the little red things. Every single time I play *Serious Sam*, I am reminded of the relentless hunting instincts of the aliens in *Defender*. This is perfect 2D with a perfect difficulty curve.



#### SUPER MARIO KART (GBA)

On a press tour of the USA in 2002 I bought a Game Boy Advance for my son and I played it on the plane all the way home. My son almost had to prise this game out my fingers. Hilariously good, and even more so now that we can play together. Everything a driving game is supposed to be.



#### DUNGEON (PDP 11)

This was where I started and it will always have a special place in my heart. I remember being 14 years old and in the school computer club admiring a large box just because it could play *Dungeon*. I knew then what computing power would be for. Text can be engrossing, and the range of emotions it evokes is still, in my opinion, not available in graphical form.



#### TAILGUNNER (VECTREX)

So few lines, yet so many panic stricken moments. The arcade version looked much better, but I think this Vectrex game was the best thing I ever managed to steal from my brothers. It's a game that is often emulated, but the original had it all and was free of useless clutter. Fire at will.



#### ELITE (BBC MICRO)

This game nearly cost me my degree and my girlfriend. My flatmates and I spent days and days and days playing this – 30 hours straight once. I was scared witless by Thargons. Then we learned to hack the code and to solder new ships and wires onto the dear little BBC machine. Oh, by the way, that girlfriend is now my wife, so it wasn't all bad.



#### CIVILIZATION II (PC)

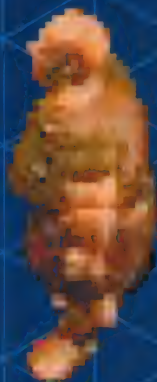
I still play this game. Everything was there in *Civilization II*, and you didn't need to read a huge manual just to play it. It all made sense, and although I had to patch it more times than an old tent, it still never failed to make journeys and evenings fly by. 4am? How did it get that late?



#### WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES (PC)

Three years ago I was an accountant. Now shops sell the games we make. The designers always win the LAN games, and at least one AI character takes the mickey, and yet this is our child and I love it despite the anguish. Motto: make games you love first, and then make them easy for others to play so they can love them too.





## GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

## BALDUR'S GATE

Chris Anderson talks to the creators of what has become one of the most revered role-playing games of all time

GAME *Baldur's Gate*

DEVELOPER Bioware Corp

RELEASED 1998

**INFLUENCED** *Baldur's Gate* can be said to have been more of an influence on game developers (who played it, loved it and went on to create their own worlds) than it was on specific games, aside from the other Bioware/Black Isle titles. *Baldur's Gate* is above all a great game in its own right.

## PROFILE

Meet two doctors who decided to become joint CEOs of their own development company, the legendary Bioware Corp. Although they now spend a lot of their time seeing to the general running of the company, both are heavily involved at the initial design stage for all the Bioware titles. They are quick to attribute the main credit of the company's success to the hardworking development teams within the company.



NAME Dr Ray Myzka

FIRST GAME

*Shattered Steel*ROLE ON *BALDUR'S GATE*

Designer/producer

NOW WORKING ON

Various Bioware titles



NAME Dr Greg Zeschuk

FIRST GAME

*Shattered Steel*ROLE ON *BALDUR'S GATE*

Designer

NOW WORKING ON

Overseeing all the Bioware titles

**BALDUR'S GATE** slipped quietly on to the PC scene, and like many classics, its true colours were only revealed over time. It's only years later with the benefit of hindsight that we can see the impact it had on the RPG genre. In its most basic form, *Baldur's Gate* is a role-playing game which appears simple on the surface, but hides deep complexity and intricate rule sets within its game engine. But while this in itself made for a deep and involving game experience, it does not account for the lasting impression it has left on gamers all over the world, nor does it explain why it became a benchmark for the role-playing genre for many years following its release.

To get to the heart of the true appeal of *Baldur's Gate*, you need to look at three things: storyline, characterisation, and a truly interactive gameworld. Many games in the genre have incorporated one or more of these vital ingredients, but none has ever blended all three as successfully as the *Baldur's Gate* series. Right from the outset you are plunged into a dramatic storyline, which is expanded upon by many of the people you meet in the first of the towns you come across.

Each town or location you visit offers new characters to meet and interrogate, and it is this varied cast of personalities that brings the game's story to life in ways that delight and amuse at every turn.

The entire gameworld sings and shouts 'interaction', with a mind-boggling number of NPCs to talk to, and countless

side-quests and sub-plots to distract you from the main storyline.

When all three of these elements are brought together, the end result is a game so immersive you can quite literally lose yourself in its world, much as you would with one of those rare books you come across that's so engrossing you simply can't put it down.

## IN THE BEGINNING

*Baldur's Gate* was brought to the world by Bioware Corp. We hunted down Dr Ray Myzka and Dr Greg Zeschuk (both joint CEOs and co-executive producers for Bioware), and asked them where they got the inspiration for a game that has brought so many hours of entertainment to so many people. "The inspiration for *Baldur's Gate* came from quite a few different sources," says Ray. "Mainly I think it came from the many great RPGs we had played over the years — games like the *Ultima* series, the *Wizardry* series, *Wasteland*, *Betrayal At Krondor*, the *Gold Box D&D* titles like *Pool Of Radiance* and the *Curse Of The Azure Bonds*, and the like. We also looked at the engines of RTS games like *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft* for inspiration for the RTS combat engine inside *Baldur's Gate*."

If you've been following our Games That Changed The World features, you'll be familiar with the question, 'Were you surprised at how successful your game has become?'. And you'll no doubt be equally familiar with the formal 'no'







response, soon followed by an explanation of how surprised the games' creator is at its success.

No such false modesty here. BioWare was fully convinced from the beginning that it had a world-beater on its hands. Greg explains: "Everyone at BioWare was confident that *Baldur's Gate* would revitalise the whole RPG genre – this is something Ray and I were sure of when we started BioWare in 1995. We started working on *Baldur's Gate* in the mid-1990s (it's shocking how long ago that seems now) and the working title of the game we were building was *Battleground Infinity*. *BI* was going to be a mythology-based RPG with a lot of multiplayer features. The

industry perspective was that RPGs were dead, and there weren't any significant RPGs in development (aside from a little something called *Diablo*, but that hadn't been announced at the time we started our work). We were very fortunate to find supportive publishers in Interplay/Black Isle – they shared the belief that RPGs were going to re-emerge as a significant factor in PC games."

#### DOCTOR, DOCTOR

Of course, a game the size of *BG* is no easy undertaking. We asked the two Docs to share with us the highs and lows of the development process, secretly hoping for juicy tidbits such as PCs being thrown out of windows and wives giving ultimatums. No such luck. However, Ray offered these insights: "We've learned a lot from the things that worked well and not so well in

*BG*. For example, we didn't spend as long as we might have wanted on the prototyping of the game, and we kept on thinking of better ways to do things. So to maintain consistent quality we ended up redoing the art for the backgrounds two times, and redoing the animation of the characters in the game once. This was a lot of work, but the team really put their hearts and souls into the game so it ended up being very good in the end." Greg expands: "The final version of *BG* is exceptionally close to the original version of the game. In fact, it is even similar to the original version of *Battleground Infinity* we imagined. We've since gone back to many of the early design documents for *BG* (and *Battleground*) and it is evident we stuck to our guns with the vision – practically all of

the features we planned were in the final release. The most shocking thing is seeing GUI designs from 1995 that match the final game. But then we did have a tremendous team working on *Baldur's Gate*, and everyone had a very concrete vision of the game we were building – it was a tremendous accomplishment for a group of people that had never worked on a game before."

#### THE QUEST FOR PERFECTION

It's difficult to see, given the technology available when *BG* was first released, how it could possibly have been made any better than it was. Strong storyline, hugely interactive gameworld and a fascinating myriad of quests were enough to keep even the most picky of RPG fans happy for a small eternity. But what if they could







The mini maps were a useful tool for getting from place to place quickly.

do it all again? What, if anything, would they change? Ray responds: "I'm not sure we would change anything – we tried our best and made a very good game in the process. Certainly, we try to improve with every game, since one of our philosophies at BioWare is to try to make each game better than the last. And many of the things that we recognised we could improve we did improve in the sequel to *Baldur's Gate*, *BGII: Shadows Of Amn*."

Ah yes, *BG2*. It was arguably the most eagerly anticipated RPG sequel ever to arrive on PC. Lofty expectations were rife. It was the first real test of BioWare's integrity as a games publisher. Should they stick with an established formula and give gamers more of the same (ie cop out)? Or would they move the series forward and introduce new elements to expand the experience? We know now that the correct answer here is they

did both. All the good things about the first game were intact, and many new features were successfully introduced, making *BG2* the 'perfect' RPG gaming experience and the new benchmark for the competition. But how did BioWare feel about the end result? "We were very happy with *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn*," says Greg, "and it seems most of the audience was as well (in fact, it continues to sell at an excellent rate years after its release). *BGII* allowed us to use everything we learned making the original *Baldur's Gate* and apply it in an environment with a stable technology and tools framework – a game designer's dream. The superb work of the designers on the game is evidence of how much fun everyone had working on it. *BGII* is one of those exceptionally rare games where even in retrospect you wouldn't really want to change anything."

### BALDUR'S GATE 3

We couldn't resist asking about *Baldur's Gate 3*. It's the game every self-respecting RPG fan is waiting for, *Dreams of Baldur's Gate* in true 3D, perhaps even with a first-person perspective, are no doubt common among fantasy gamers everywhere. An intricate *BG* storyline bursting with interesting characters married to the latest in graphics technology would surely be the ultimate RPG. So, is it going to happen? Over to Greg: "The best way for me to answer this is that we don't really know the future of the *Baldur's Gate* series. We closed the Child of Bhaal story arc with *Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal*, and we were very

### ANYTHING YOU CAN DO...

...FEW CAN DO BETTER. WHO DARES EMULATE THE THE MAJESTY OF BG?

It's perhaps testament to *Baldur's Gate*'s near-perfect gameplay that we have seen so few titles take it on at its own game. Most successful in this department was undoubtedly *Planescape Torment*, which, apart from being excellent in its own right, was for all intents and purposes *Baldur's Gate* in a non-fantasy environment. *Neverwinter Nights* was expected to be *Baldur's Gate 3D* but, well, it wasn't. But what the hell – it was still a great game nonetheless.



Neverwinter Nights: not just Baldur's Gate in 3D.



With six characters in a party you had to be careful not to lose one.

happy about being able to finish things off properly. All too often game stories are left unfinished, and we're content that we concluded the story behind the *Baldur's Gate* games we developed at BioWare."

That's not the answer we were looking for at all. It was in fact the 'wrong' answer, an erroneous response, but if Ray and Greg have a secret version of *BG3* up their sleeves, they are refusing to be budged on it. So on this particular subject, we are dropped soundly back in the land of 'wait and see'.

So where do we go from here? Every year it seems the PC press make new announcements explaining why the RPG genre is dead and buried, and every year a new RPG title comes along to prove them wrong. The truth is RPGs are evolving and changing along with gamers tastes and whims. Action RPGs have become fairly common, though purists would no doubt argue they are not true RPGs unless they have 20 gazillion stats to mess about with. As far as Ray is concerned, RPGs aren't going anywhere anytime soon: "I think RPGs are a vibrant genre – it's all a question of how you define them. Since



The beautifully-drawn portraits fired-up the imagination.





## "We see any game with significant story and characterisation as an RPG"

GREG ZESCHUK  
CEO, BIOWARE CORP.

we consider an RPG to be any game with heavy story or character development, we think that the future of RPGs looks very strong indeed. More and more games are including elements of story or character development these days, whether they be action games, action-adventures, RTSs, or any of a myriad of other categories. As such, we have a lot of possibilities available to us for our future titles as well." Greg adds: "BioWare's focus is story and character development. Our definition of RPG is very broad, and we believe that any game containing significant story and character development can be classed as an RPG. In the future it is likely we'll explore more merged genres such as action RPGs and RTS RPGs."

Strong hints, then, that hardcore RPG specialist BioWare will be moving in a more conventional direction with some of their



The cut-scenes that you got before entering a major new area were pretty good for the time.

future titles, and as Ray explains, some of these titles may be with us sooner than you think: "We're currently working on a number of very cool games – five projects in total. One of them is *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic*, for Xbox and PC. *SW: KotOR* is a very cool RPG – the first RPG ever in the *Star Wars* universe, actually. In it, you get to be a Jedi, playing either on the dark or the light side of the force. The storyline is set in an exciting period of the *Star Wars* universe, some

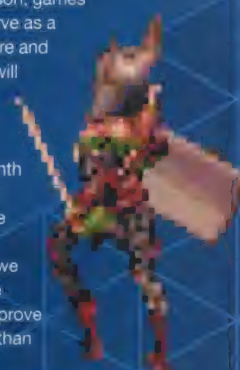
4,000 years before the movies. We're also working on two expansion packs to *Neverwinter Nights*. The first of them is entitled *Shadows Of Undrentide* (co-developed with Floodgate Entertainment) – this should be ready by the early summer – the second will have more details announced later this year, with Christmas as a target date for its release. We're also working on another new, BioWare-created intellectual property for Xbox, to be published by Microsoft – we'll have more details on that game later in the year. Finally, we have a new, BioWare-created intellectual property for PC that we're also early in development on – we haven't yet shown this to publishers. All told, we have a lot of projects in development right now."

### TRUE CLASSIC

The future looks bright for BioWare then, but let us not forget where it all began, with a classic game called *Baldur's Gate*. It seems pretty evident now that we are very unlikely to see a *Baldur's Gate III*, but *BGI*, being the current 'definitive' version of the *BG* series, still remains a shining example of how to make a near-

perfect RPG, the likes of which we may never see again. Even today I can think of very few titles that can grip you in the same way the *Baldur's Gate* series did. Maybe it's a sign of the times, and an indication that action games are slowly edging out hardcore strategy and RPG titles. Or maybe it's because real classics are few and far between, and truly innovative titles are destined to only appear once every couple of years.

Whatever the reason, games like *Baldur's Gate* serve as a firm reminder that pure and addictive gameplay will always win over the games-buying public, despite what the flavour of the month might be. If we could only get this message through to today's development teams we might find games like *Baldur's Gate* would prove to be the rule, rather than the exception. [✓]



With excellent graphics for its day, *Baldur's Gate* impressed on all levels.



The much copied inventory, where you spent a lot of time shuffling things.

## BIOWARE: THE FUTURE AND BEYOND

### PEER INTO OUR CRYSTAL BALL TO SEE WHAT LIES IN WAIT...

*Baldur's Gate* paved the way for some of the best RPG titles that have hit PC, but BioWare has moved on, exploring pastures new and varied. Of most interest at this point is its upcoming *Star Wars* title, *Knights Of The Old Republic*, which will use a conventional RPG system at its roots, but will sport stunning visuals (see accompanying screenshot for solid proof). *Neverwinter Nights: Shadows Of Undrentide* is also looking pretty impressive, and is one of two major *NN* expansions planned for this year. BioWare also has another 'secret' PC project in the works. We tried to prise more info out of them on this but they were having none of it.



*Star Wars* meets statistical geekdom. How can it fail?



*Neverwinter Nights* in expansion pack non-shocker.



# NEXT MONTH

## MASSIVE E3 PREVIEW SPECIAL

The biggest games from the world's greatest games show revealed, including:

### CALL OF DUTY

Exclusive playtest! *PC ZONE* goes behind the scenes with the amazing new shooter from the *Medal Of Honor* team

#### AND ALL THE LATEST ON...

**DOOM 3**, **ROME: TOTAL WAR**, **MAX PAYNE 2**, **DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR**, **QUAKE 4**, **BLACK & WHITE 2**, **HALF-LIFE 2**, **TEAM FORTRESS 2**, **THIEF 3**, **COMMANDOS 3**, **SILENT HILL 3**, **HOMEWORLD 2**, **JUDGE DREDD VS JUDGE DEATH**, **BREED**, **SPLINTER CELL 2**, **THE SIMS 2**, **MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT**, **JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY**, **EVERQUEST II**, **ALIENS VS PREDATOR 3**, **STAR WARS GALAXIES**, **HALO**, **GROUND CONTROL 2** AND LOADS MORE

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The single-player version of the world's favourite shooter is almost here!

Find out if it's been worth the wait with our massive review

### ENTER THE MATRIX

The action blockbuster explodes onto PC

**NEXT ISSUE ON SALE:  
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#### PLUS

#### REVIEWS OVERLOAD!

### GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY

The ultimate criminal epic arrives on PC

### MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR - VIKING INVASION

Add-on brutality from the world-beating RTS

#### CHASER ISS3

#### DAY OF DEFEAT COLIN MCRAE RALLY 3

#### EXCLUSIVE DEMOS!

#### UNREAL 2: THE AWAKENING

#### BREED

#### RISE OF NATIONS

#### CHASER MULTIPLAYER

And truckloads more!



# RETRO ZONE

YOUR REGULAR DOSE OF GAMING NOSTALGIA

"It allowed players the option to fling diseased cattle into an enemy fortress"



Lobbing stones was pretty good, but diseased cows were much better.

## DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

Fling cows and unite England

IF YOU had to choose one developer who was ahead of its time, Cinemaware would be it. Founded in 1986 when most developers were saving their 8-bit code on tape, Cinemaware started work on four next-generation games for the new Commodore Amiga, the first of which was to be their most enduring and well-loved.

As with all its games, *Defender Of The Crown* was intentionally designed as an interactive movie, with colourfully animated full-screen graphics and a range of gameplay challenges; from the *Risk*-style strategy required to conquer a

divided England, to jousting action sequences, sword fighting and castle sieges, which famously allowed players the option to fling diseased cattle into an enemy fortress. *Defender* shifted a million copies in its lifetime and was probably responsible in hastening many people's decision to upgrade from Spectrums and C64s.

Very much the *Medieval: Total War* of its day, it was no surprise when the company reformed in 2000 after an 11-year absence. Cinemaware is attempting a sequel, *Robin Hood: Defender Of The Crown*, which is due later this year.

RETRO  
ZONE

OCTOBER  
1986

**Richie Shoemaker** is never one to pass up the opportunity to wave a chicken in the air. Or stick a deckchair up his nose for that matter

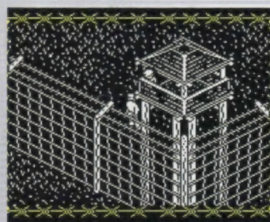


"Erm, have it at thee!"



Long live the French Vs England divide.

### THE BEST OF THE REST



#### THE GREAT ESCAPE

(Spectrum, C64, PC)  
Unfortunately you couldn't leap over barbed wire on a motorbike, or stage elaborate July 4th diversions, but in almost every way this was the perfect POW caper. Inspired by, rather than based on, the film, it was one of the most open-ended isometric adventures to appear on the 8-bit machines. It will be interesting to see whether the new SCI game of the film can improve things. We rather doubt it.



#### METROID

(NES)  
Created by the much-missed Gunpei Yokoi, the designer of the GameBoy, this is the first in the puzzle action series that introduces Samus Aran, a female bounty hunter who is out to thwart Space Pirates and the Motherbrain. Remembered for its pace, music and five different endings, the game was eventually superseded by the classic *Super Metroid* in 1994, followed of course by eight years of silence.



#### SPACE QUEST

(Atari ST, Amiga, PC)  
Based on the same code as the early *King's Quest* games, *Space Quest* was a one of the first graphic adventures to be faintly adult and even amusing, blazing a trail for the likes of *Monkey Island* in future years. Unfortunately the smiles were wiped from most people's faces thanks to the insane difficulty of the game and constant demise of your character.



#### THRUST

(BBC, C64, Amstrad, Spectrum)  
Few games from the 1980s remain as playable as the day they were created, but *Thrust* is certainly one of them. Inspired by *Lunar Lander*, the game has you piloting a ship across a number of alien planets, using up fuel, avoiding gunfire and stealing pods. Gravity was the main enemy in this game (aside from the controls) and as soon as you connected the pod to your ship, things became twice as hard.

### NEWS

#### GAMING NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1986

- 'Just Say No' is the government-sponsored catchphrase of the moment and after seeing *Grange Hill*'s Zammo fall prey to the perils of drugs, it seems the games industry is keen to jump on the bandwagon with news that pop supergroup coke-shovellers Arcadia are to join in support for the Off The Hook campaign.
- Despite selling out to Amstrad, it seems Sir Clive Sinclair is back building cheap computers, with rumours that his latest machine, a portable computer 'Pandora' will be launched early in 1987.
- Everyone seems to be getting excited by screenshots of Beyond Software's *Star Trek* game. Having been teased by 'photorealistic' shots from the Atari ST version, Spectrum owners are in a lather. *Starfleet Command* is due out at Christmas (and we're still waiting).



## PREVIOUSLY ON MR CURSOR...

Having escaped from Pitcairn Island in 1996, Mr Cursor found himself living on the much nicer but totally isolated south Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha. A few weeks ago, however, he thumbed a lift on a pau-pau boat. His new destination? Sierra Leone.



# MR CURSOR

(He's afraid of graphics cards, jargon and overclocking)

## BUCKING BRONCO

"Ho, ho, ho, you fret too much my friend - she is not as fragile as you imagine," boomed N'gango as his ship smashed head-on into yet another 40ft wave. I consoled myself with the fact that he and his crew had just survived a trip round Cape Horn, but talk about rust: the boat looked like an upside-down hollowed-out version of Ayers Rock.

"You ask me questions on technology," said N'gango

suggestion, but due to having been stuck in the South Atlantic for seven years I have no knowledge on the subject whatsoever. (The most techy piece of kit available to me on Tristan was a 1930s Imperial circular-keyed typewriter).

A stroke of luck, though: N'gango turned out to be a bit of a computer whiz.

## A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE

We sat in his cabin and N'gango produced a small pile of computer magazines he'd recently acquired. He flicked through them and handed me one.

"This has ten whole pages filled with the information you are after," he said. "Read it and you will be armed with all the knowledge you are chasing."

I flicked through the pages.

"But it's in Spanish," I said. "It was bought in Ecuador. You speak no Spanish?"

"No."

So N'gango went through the magazine article himself, dictating. He started with the easy bits, explaining how a computer game could hand off a load of data to a graphics card, enabling it (ie the computer) to busy itself with other important tasks, like artificial intelligence or whatever.

"So it's sharing the workload?" I said.

"Exactly, my friend," said N'gango. "It is like the engines beneath us." Then he went on to explain how graphics cards had really come on over the years, being now almost like secondary computers within the host computer. The

problem, however, was that by this time he'd turned into a jargon factory. He was translating information from Spanish into English for me, but to all intents and purposes he may as well have been translating from Spanish straight into Temne (his own tongue).

He went on for half an hour. And this is what I now know about graphics cards...

(1) Anisotropic filtering 128-bit floating points, with core zithium analysers containing stencil buffer data. (2) Vertex pixels. (3) Pixel vertexes. (4) The F-buffer. (5) The Z-buffer. (6) The Z-cache. (7) Volatic exchangers. (8) Chipscape variance stacks. (9) Sacrificial pseudo-anodes. (10) Can't remember. (11) Brain's stopped working. (12) And that's pretty much it.

I told N'gango that probably the last computer game I'd seen had been called *Doom*, and said I couldn't imagine how graphics could have got majorly better than that, graphics cards notwithstanding.

"You have been starved, my friend," said N'gango. "Come, come with me."

I followed him back up to the bridge.

## ER, LIKE 'WOW'

"This is the brain that runs my ship," said N'gango proudly, patting his PC. "She does everything, from navigation to engine management. As well as this, I can also play games on her. Let me show you what a game of today looks like."

It was *Unreal 2*, and I was gobsmacked: blown away.

"So that's all down to the

graphics card then?" I asked after about 20 minutes.

"It would not be possible without it," said N'gango.

"Mind you," I said, "it's a trifle on the jerky side."

N'gango seemed deflated. He furrowed his brow. "It is the computer," he said. "She isn't as powerful as she could be."

"Oh," I said.

"But it is possible for me to make her more powerful," added N'gango. "It is a procedure called overclocking. It is a way of making information run through her mind faster and faster."

So N'gango decided to overclock the ship's computer, right there and then. He sent a couple of his crew to the galley, to get a fridge. I asked him why.

"As you speed the chip up, so she also gets much hotter, my friend," he explained.

Before long there was a fridge lying on its back on the floor of the bridge, with the PC tower stuffed into its open ice-box. N'gango was fiddling about on the BIOS screen, changing some numbers...

"She is currently a two giga-hertz computer," he said. "Shortly she will be a four giga-hertz computer."

He finished in BIOS and rebooted the PC, which made it to the start-up screen before suddenly exploding. The lights went off all over the ship. Someone from the engine-room piped up the information that one engine had cut out, and the other was misfiring badly. Furthermore the storm was gathering in intensity.

"We are in very deep shit, my friend," said N'gango.

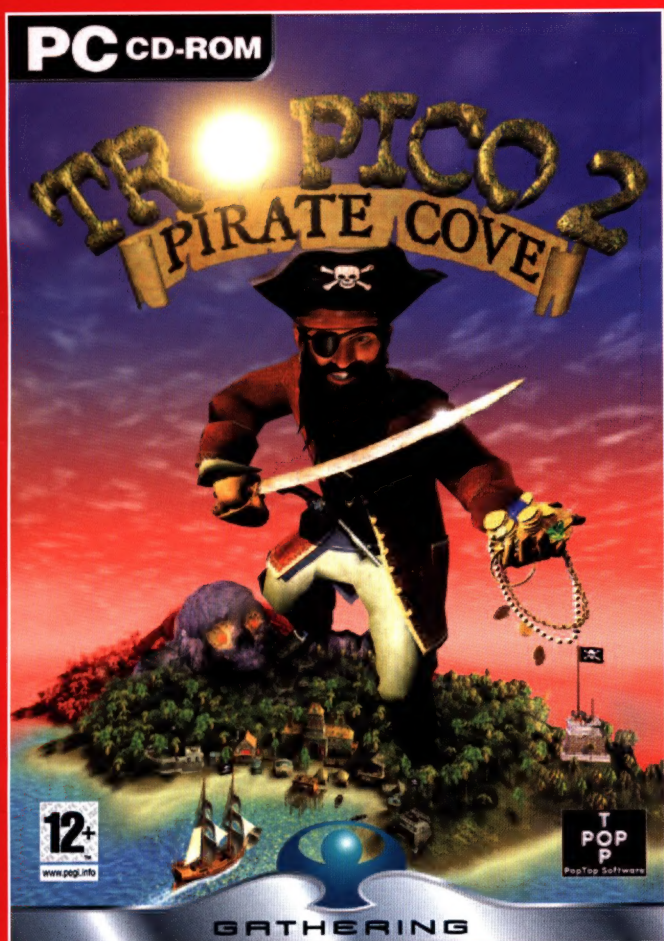
To be continued...

**"Graphics cards:  
due to having  
been stuck in the  
south Atlantic for  
seven years I have  
no knowledge on  
the subject"**



# VIRGIN LOVES

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